

7

(Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta

The (Impermanent) Eye Discourse | S 25.1
 Theme: How to reach the path in this life itself
 Translated by Piya Tan ©2005

1 The truth-follower and the faith-follower**1.0 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

1.0.1 The (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta (S 25.1) is the first of a series of 10 closely parallel suttas, forming **the Okkanta (or Okkantika) Saṃyutta** (connected teachings on the descent) [1.6.1], that is, chapter 25 of the Saṃyutta. All these suttas mention the same 2 types of individuals—the truth-follower and the faith-follower—who gain “the certainty of rightness” (*sammatta,niyāma*), the supermundane noble eightfold path, including the path of streamwinning (*sotāpatti,magga*).¹

These 10 suttas give the clearest definition (albeit a brief one) of the faith-follower and the truth-follower found in the Pali Canon.² The difference between the two is that of their dominant spiritual faculty (*indriya*). The former, who has strong faith, resolves (*adhimuccati*) on the impermanence of the senses, the aggregates, etc, as listed in the 10 suttas (**S ch 25**), is a **faith-follower** (*saddhā'nusārī*). The latter, who focuses on wisdom, gains understanding of the impermanence of the same factors, is a **truth-follower** (*dhammānusārī*).

1.0.2 Essentially, the suttas describe both **the faith-follower** and **the truth-follower** as those who *are certain of not passing away without having realized the fruit of streamwinning in this life itself*. When either of them truly knows and sees for himself the reality of impermanence, he becomes a **streamwinner**. This is a key characteristic of theirs mentioned in the Suttas of the Okkanta Saṃyutta. Their other special qualities are mentioned in the 2 **Sarakāṇi Suttas**³ and **the Kīṭā,giri Sutta** (M 70). [1.2 + 1.3]

1.0.3 Faith-freed, view-attained, body-witness

1.0.3.1 The Kīṭā,giri Sutta (M 70) further states that **the streamwinner** who is strong in faith, on attaining fruition, is called “**faith-freed** [freed by faith]” or “faith-liberated” (*saddhā,vimutta*), while the one cultivated in wisdom is said to be “**view-attained**” (*diṭṭhi-p,patta*), who has gained right view (although he has yet to fully realize the nature of non-self, which is the domain of the arhat). These 2 terms describe how streamwinning arises through the harmonizing and completeness of their spiritual faculties.⁴ [1.6.3.2]

1.0.3.2 The Kīṭā,giri Sutta mentions a 3rd kind of individual in terms of *meditation*—the “**body-witness**” (*kāya,sakkhī*)—that is, those who can meditate to reach the formless attainments.⁵ The body-wit-

¹ S 25/3:225-228. The other 9 discourses of **Okkanta Saṃyutta** (the Connected Suttas on the Descent), ie, ch 25 of the Saṃyutta Nikāya [1.1.3], all make a distinction between 2 types of individuals—the faith-follower (*saddhā'nusārī*) [1.2] and the truth-follower (*dhammānusārī*) [1.3]—who enter into “the certainty of rightness” (*sammatta,niyāma*), ie, the transcendent noble eightfold path, or the path of streamwinning (*sotāpatti,magga*) [1.4].

² See Gethin 2001:126-138.

³ See **Sarakāṇi S 1** (S 55.24), SD 3.6.

⁴ On harmonizing and completing the 5 faculties, see **Pañc'indriya**, SD 10.4 (2). On the 3 types of streamwinners—the single-seeder, the clan-goer, and the seven-at-most—see **Niṭṭha S** (A 10.63), SD 3.3(1b).

⁵ M 70,17-21/1:478 f (SD 11.1).

ness, however, is not a separate class but a *genus*. It applies generically or relatively (*pariyāyena*)⁶ to any kind of saint who experience the formless attainments leading, in due course, to arhathood.⁷ Here, “witness” (*sakkhī*) simply means “experience,” and “body” (*kāya*) alludes to “personal experience,” that is, by oneself. Hence, in meditation lingo, we often hear the phrase “have touched with (one’s own) body” (*kāyena phassitva/phussitvā*) in just this sense.⁸

1.1 SCRIPTURAL CONTEXTS

1.1.1 The Dharmafarer’s destiny

1.1.1.1 The Alaggadūpama Sutta (M 22) closes with the Buddha defining the various destinies of the saints and those who keep to the Dharma:

Bhikshus, the teaching well proclaimed by me, is plain, open, clear,⁹ free from patchwork.¹⁰ In the teaching well proclaimed by me, plain, open, clear, free from patchwork:

(1) there is no (more) round of existence for those monks who are **arhats with cankers destroyed, who have lived the holy life, done what is to be done, laid down the burden, reached their own goal,**¹¹ destroyed the fetters of being, completely freed through final knowledge.

(2) ... those monks who, with the destruction of the 5 lower fetters,¹² are **spontaneously reborn** [in the pure abodes]¹³ and there attain final nirvana, without ever returning from that world.

(3) ... those monks who, with the destruction of the 3 fetters [1.7.3.2] and with the diminishing of lust, hate and delusion, are **once-returners,** all of them¹⁴ returning only once to this world to make an end of suffering.

(4) ... those monks who, with the destruction of the 3 fetters, are **streamwinners, not bound for the lower world** [1.7.3.2.], sure of going over to self-awakening [1.7.3.3].

(5) ... those (who) are **truth-followers** or are **faith-followers** (those with **just a bit of faith, just a bit of love for me**): they are all bound for heaven.¹⁵

(M 22,42-47/1:141 f, abridged), SD 3.13

⁶ See Gethin 2001:135 f & **Pariyāya Nippariyāya**, SD 68.2.

⁷ The *kāya, sakkhī* is def at M 70,17/1:478 (SD 11.1).

⁸ **Samaṇa-m-acala S** (A 4.87,3), SD 20.13; SD 4.25 (3.3.1).

⁹ “Plain, open, clear,” *uttāno vivaṇṇo pakāsito*.

¹⁰ “Free from patchwork,” *chinna, piloṭṭika*, that is, unlike a patched-up piece of cloth. Comy: a cloth patched up with stitches and knots that are similar to hypocrisy and other deceptions. SubComy: Substituting assumed attitudes and postures for non-existing practice of meditation and insight. Here the analogy—that of a piece of new cloth free of patches or stitches—refers to the inner consistency of the Teaching. All this probably means that the Buddha’s teaching is not a hodge-podge of ideas to impress others or win fame, following and fortune, but a (or *the*) statement of a direct experience of spiritual liberation.

¹¹ *Sadatthā* may be resolved as: (1) *sa-d-atthā*, “one’s own goal,” (2) *sant + atthā*, “the sublime goal,” “the ideal.”

¹² The 10 fetters: see below, under “three fetters” n.

¹³ *Opapātika*, that is, reborn in the pure abodes (*suddh’āvāsa*), the 5 highest heavens of the form world (*rūpa, loka*) where only non-returners assume their last birth to become arhats and attain nirvana. These worlds are Āviha (“Non-declining”), Ātappa (“Unworried”), Sudassā (“Clearly Visible”), Sudassī (“Clear-visioned”) and Akaṇiṭṭhā (“Highest”) (D 3:237, M 3:103, Vbh 425, Pug 42-46).

¹⁴ “All of them,” *sabbe te*, omitted in **Ānāpānasati S** (M 118), SD 7.13.

¹⁵ “Those who just a bit of faith, just a bit of love for me,” *yesarī mayi saddhā, mattarī pema, mattarī*. The “just” emphasizes the quality it qualifies. This phrase recurs in **Sarakāni S 1** (S 55.24/4:375-377), where see the phrase, “just a bit of faith, just a bit of love”: SD 3.6 (4.1).

1.1.1.2 It should be noted “**monks**” here and in similar contexts refer to practitioners, especially when they are meditating or in a state of mental stillness. In other words, when we attain right samadhi or dhyana, we are *in effect* monks, renunciants, or those who attain a monk’s state (*bhikkhu, bhāva*).¹⁶ When we attain any state of sainthood, that state is no different from the one attained by a monastic, as stated in the closing of **the (Mahānāma) Gilāyana Sutta** (S 55.54).¹⁷

In short, with proper Dharma living, training and meditating, especially the perception of impermanence, even a lay practitioner spiritually attains the mind of a true monk, as intended by the Buddha. However, those monastics who are true renunciants—keeping to the moral training, mental cultivation and insight wisdom—will attain arhathood, or at least streamwinning, in this life itself.¹⁸

1.1.2 The 7 kinds of individuals. By way of an overview, **the Kīṭā,gi Sutta** (M 70) gives a list of 7 individuals (*sappurisa*), including the truth-follower and the faith-follower. These 7 “true individuals” are always listed in this same order, generally, from the highest to the lowest in terms of sainthood level, thus:¹⁹

(1) The one freed both ways (or dual-freed),	<i>ubhato, bhāga, vimutta</i>	}	arhats
(2) The wisdom-freed,	<i>paññā, vimutta</i>		
(3) The body-witness, [1.0.3.2]	<i>kāya, sakkhī</i>	}	arhat-to-be (generic)
(4) The view-attainer,	<i>diṭṭhi-p, patta</i>		
(5) The faith-freed,	<i>saddhā, vimutta</i>	}	streamwinners
(6) The truth-follower, and	<i>dhammānusārī</i>		
(7) The faith-follower.	<i>saddhā’nusārī</i>	}	streamwinners-to-be

(M 70,14/1:477), SD 11.1 (5.2)

Of these 7 saints, says the Kīṭā,gi Sutta, only the first 2 have **done their “duties with diligence”** (M 70,15+16), that is, they are totally freed as arhats.²⁰ The other 5 saints still need to “do their duties with diligence” (M 70,17-21).²¹ The last 2—the truth follower and the faith-follower—are not yet aryas (saints of the path), but are true individuals (*sappurisa*), that is, those who are diligent in moral virtue and mindfulness.

Because of the strength of their **faculty** (*indriya*) of wisdom or of faith, they are declared to be practitioners who are *certain of attaining the path in this life itself*. Because of their wisdom and their faith, they

¹⁶ Here “a monk” (*bhikkhu*) may refer to either an ordained monastic or anyone who is meditating (esp, doing satipatthana): see **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10,3A) + n, SD 13.3 + SD 13.1 (3.1.1.5). See DA 3:756; MA 1:241; VbhA 216 f; cf SnA 251. On meditation as renunciation, see **Hālidakāni S 1** (S 22.3/3:9-12), SD 10.12; **Bhāvanā**, SD 15.1 (14.7); **Sexuality**, SD 31.7 (1.6.2).

¹⁷ S 55.54,19 (SD 4.10). The Sutta actually says that one has directed one’s mind to “the cessation of identity” *sakkāya, nirodha*, a syn of the 3rd noble truth = nirvana: D 3:216 (*antā*), 3:240; M 1:299; S 3:159, 5:410; A 2:33, 2:165, 3:246, 3:401; see also DA 3:992, AA 3:153; *sakkāya = te, bhūmaka, vaṭṭa* (“cycles of the 3 worlds,” ie, sense, form, and formless worlds) (AA 3:404). On a simple level, the overcoming of *sakkāya, diṭṭhi* (“self-identity view”) leads to streamwinning; hence, to any of the stages of sainthood. See **Entering the stream**, SD 3.3(5.1).

¹⁸ See SD 13.1 (3.1.1.5).

¹⁹ For a comprehensive comparative table of “Persons according to strength of *indriyas* in descending order,” see Gethin 2001:127 (Table 2).

²⁰ The key difference between the two kinds of arhats—the dual-freed arhat and the wisdom-freed arhat—is that the former has a direct experience of the formless attainments (*arūpa samāpatti*), while the latter does not.

²¹ The uniqueness of the Kīṭā,gi S classification of **the 7 saints** is that it is not only based on path and fruition (as found in the more common eightfold scheme), but also according to their dominant spiritual faculty (*indriya*). See **Kīṭā,gi S** (M 70/1:473-481), SD 11.1 Into (5.2). The 7 types are defined somewhat differently at **Puggala Paññatti** (Pug 1.30-36/14 f) & **Visuddhi, magga** (Vism 21.74-78/659 f).

are said to be certain of not being reborn in any subhuman state, that is, they will be reborn as wholesome humans in an environment conducive for Dharma practice, or even in some heavenly state.²²

1.1.3 Through faith or through wisdom

1.1.3.1 The truth-follower (*dhammānusārī*) and the faith-follower (*saddhānusārī*)²³ are mentioned in all the 10 suttas of **the Okkanta Saṃyutta** (ch 25), which consists of 10 parallel, short but remarkable, suttas with only one message, that is, the reflections of impermanence on the following:²⁴

(1) the 6 internal senses	(Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta	S 25.1/3:225 ²⁵	SD 16.7
(2) the 6 external senses	(Anicca) Rūpa Sutta	S 25.2/3:225 f	
(3) the 6 sense-consciousnesses	(Anicca) Viññāṇa Sutta	S 25.3/3:226	
(4) the 6 sense-contacts	(Anicca) Phassa Sutta	S 25.4/3:226	
(5) the 6 feelings	(Anicca) Vedanā Sutta	S 25.5/3:226	SD 17.3(4.5.1)
(6) the 6 perceptions	(Anicca) Saññā Sutta	S 25.6/3:227	SD 17.4(10)
(7) the 6 volitions	(Anicca) Cetanā Sutta	S 25.7/3:227	
(8) the 6 cravings	(Anicca) Taṇhā Sutta	S 25.8/3:227	
(9) the 6 elements	(Anicca) Dhātu Sutta	S 25.9/3:227	
(10) the 5 aggregates	(Anicca) Khandha Sutta	S 25.10/3:227 f	SD 42.17

1.1.3.2 The habitual practice of the reflection on impermanence—such as those based on any of the 10 subjects mentioned [1.1.3.1], brings us to “descend into” (*okkanti*) [1.6.1.3] streamwinning in this life itself. We will become streamwinners, 預流 *yùliú* in this life itself—whether we “**have faith**, who firmly believe” (*saddahati adhimuccati*) in the impermanence of the 6 senses, etc (that is, as faith-followers, *saddhā’nusārī*, 信行者 *xìnxíngzhě*), or accept this truth “after just some pondering over them **with some wisdom**” (*paññāya mattaso nijjhānam khamanti*) (that is, as truth-followers, *dhammānusārī* 法行者 *fǎxíngzhě*). We would not die without having realized the fruit of streamwinning.²⁶

The faith-follower and the truth-follower are also described in the 2 **Sarakāni Suttas** (S 55.24-25),²⁷ although in slightly different terms.

1.2 THE TRUTH-FOLLOWER [§5]

1.2.1 In terms of spiritual faculty (*indriya*), the **truth-follower** or wisdom-follower (*dhammānusārī*) is a practitioner whose faculty of *faith* is weak, but in whom the faculty of wisdom (*paññ’indriya*) is strong. Thus, it is easy for him to cultivate the path by wisdom (*paññā*). As stated in **the (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta** (S 25.1), he reflects on impermanence and investigates its nature until he effectively understands it, which will bring him the fruit of streamwinning.

When the truth-follower attains the fruit of streamwinning, he is called “**(right) view attainer**” or “**vision attainer**” (*diṭṭhi-p, patta*).²⁸ **The Kīṭā, giri Sutta** defines a **truth-follower** as follows:

²² See SD 3.6 (4.1; 4.2.1).

²³ There is not fixed rule which of these 2 are mentioned first. **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25.1) and the other 9 suttas of **Okkanta Saṃyutta** (S 25) all list the faith-follower first [§4]; **Kīṭā, giri S** (M 70,20), **Alaggadūpama S** (M 142,4) and **Sarakāni S 1** (S 55.34,11), SD 3.6, list truth-follower first.

²⁴ For practical details on the perception of impermanence, see **Dīgh’āvu S** (S 55.3/5:344-347), SD 23.16.

²⁵ This first sutta is here tr in full.

²⁶ On lay followers attaining streamwinning, see **Laymen saints**, SD 8.6, & **The layman and dhyana**, SD 8.5(3), esp **Sa, upādisesa S** (A 9.12/4:380-382).

²⁷ S 55.24-25/5:375-380 (SD 3.6).

²⁹Here, bhikshus, a certain person, not having touched the liberations with the body, dwells not in those liberations that are peaceful and formless, transcending forms, and his mental cankers are *not yet destroyed* through his having seen them with wisdom, but those truths proclaimed by the Tathagata are accepted by him after just some pondering over them with wisdom.

That is to say, he has these qualities [**the 5 spiritual faculties**], namely: the faculty of faith, the faculty of effort, the faculty of mindfulness, the faculty of concentration, the faculty of wisdom. (M 70,20/1:479), SD 11.1

1.2.2 The Sarakāṇi Sutta 1 (S 55.24) lists and defines 6 individuals, beginning with the 4 types of saints (arhat, non-returner, once-returner, streamwinner) [§§7-10], followed by *implicitly* listing the truth-follower and the faith-follower [§§11-12]: both are described without being mentioned by name but by **faculty**. Of the **truth-follower**, the Buddha explains.³⁰

Here, Mahānāma, some person does not have wise faith in the 3 jewels. He is one neither of joyous wisdom nor of quick wisdom, and he has not attained liberation. However, he has these 5 qualities [**the 5 spiritual faculties**]*—the faculty of faith, the faculty of effort, the faculty of mindfulness, the faculty of concentration, the faculty of wisdom*.³¹

And he accepts the teachings proclaimed by the Tathāgata after just some pondering over them with wisdom.³²

This person, too, Mahānāma, is freed from hell, the animal birth, the preta realm and the suffering states. (S 55.24,11/5:377), SD 3.6

1.3 THE FAITH-FOLLOWER [§4]

1.3.1 The faith-follower (*saddhā'nusārī*) is a disciple in whom the faculty of faith (*saddh'indriya*) is predominant and who cultivates the path led by wise faith and his main practice is the perception of impermanence. When he attains the fruit of streamwinning, he is called "**faith-freed**" (*saddhā,vimutta*).³³ According to **the (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta**, both the truth-follower and the faith-follower have reached the plane of the true individuals (*sappurisa*): they are moral and mindful individuals with deep respect for the Buddha—but have not yet to become full-fledged streamwinners but will certainly do so before dying.³⁴

²⁸ *Diṭṭhi-p,patta*, see **Kiṭṭāgiri S** (M 70,19/1:478,18-23), SD 11.1; Pug 15/1:35-36, Vism 21.75.

²⁹ *Idha bhikkhave ekacco puggalo ye te santā vimokhā atikkamma rūpe āruppā te na kāyena phassitvā viharati, paññāya c'assa disvā āsavā aparikkhīṇā honti. Tathāgata-p,paveditā c'assa dhammā paññāya mattaso nijjhānaṃ khamanti, api c'assa ime dhammā honti seyyathidaṃ saddh'indriyaṃ viriy'indriyaṃ sat'indriyaṃ samādh'indriyaṃ paññ'indriyaṃ.*

³⁰ "Truth-follower," **dhammānusārī**, alt tr "Dharma-follower." Although **Sarakāṇi S** does not specifically mention it here, this section describes the truth-follower, while the next section describes the faith-follower (*saddhā'nusārī*). They are defined in **Kiṭṭāgiri S** (M 70,20-21/1:479). According to **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25.1/3:225), these 2 types of person have reached the plane of the noble ones but have not yet realized the fruit of streamwinning, but will do so before they die. See S:B 1098 nn268-269.

³¹ The context here is interesting: it clearly implies that faith as a spiritual faculty can be "unrooted in wisdom," but only if this faith is in the 3 jewels, or in practical terms, in *impermanence*. It should be noted that there is a very significant difference between "blind faith" in impermanence and in the God-idea! The former is after the fact (it is taken reality for granted, as it were), but in the latter, it is simply a religious notion at best. For the 5 spiritual faculties, see §§20, 21 & **Sarakāṇi S** (S 55.24), SD 3.6 Intro.

³² *C'assa dhammā paññāya mattaso nijjhānaṃ khamanti.* I render *mattaso* here as "only ... some." See S:B 1099 n269.

³³ *Saddhā,vimutta*, see **Kiṭṭāgiri S** (M 70,20/1:478,29-34), SD 11.1; Pug 15/1:35-36, Vism 21.75.

³⁴ See S:B 1098 nn268-269.

1.3.2 The faith-follower (*saddhā'nusārī*) is defined in the **Kiṭṭā,giri Sutta** (M 70) as follows:

³⁵Here, bhikkhus, a certain person, not having touched the liberations with the body, dwells not in those liberations that are peaceful and formless, transcending forms, and his mental cankers are *not yet destroyed* through his having seen them with wisdom, but he has just a bit of faith, just a bit of love for the Tathagata.³⁶

That is to say, he has these qualities [**the 5 spiritual faculties**], namely: the faculty of faith, the faculty of effort, the faculty of mindfulness, the faculty of concentration, the faculty of wisdom. (M 70,9/1:478 f), SD 11.1

1.3.3 In the **Sarakāṇi Sutta 1** (S 55.24), the Buddha defines the faith-follower in terms of *faculty* to Mahānāma, thus:³⁷

Here, Mahānāma, some person does not have wise faith in *the 3 jewels*. He is one neither of joyous wisdom nor of quick wisdom, and he has not attained liberation. However, he has *the 5 spiritual faculties*. And he has just a bit of faith in the Tathāgata, just a bit of love for him.³⁸

This person, too, Mahānāma, is freed from hell, the animal birth, the preta realm and the suffering states. (S 55.24,12/5:377), SD 3.6

1.3.4 The 5 faculties, as already mentioned, are those of *faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom* [1.2]. In this case, **the faith-follower** is weak in the faculty of wisdom. However, he makes some *effort* in *mindfulness* and *concentration*: in other words, he asserts himself in meditating, or at least in being mindful (such as the perception of impermanence). Practising by himself in this way may be difficult, but on account of his having “just a bit of faith,”³⁹ he is, for that very reason, spurred on, especially with some proper guidance from a morally virtuous and wise teacher.

1.4 THE TRUTH-FOLLOWER AND THE FAITH-FOLLOWER: A SUMMARY OF DIFFERENCES

1.4.1 The Majjhima Commentary says that the truth-follower and the faith-follower are individuals cultivating the path (*maggam bhāveti*), so that they are “those *standing* in the path of streamwinning” (*sotāpatti,magga-t,thā*).⁴⁰ While in **the truth-follower**, faculty of wisdom (*paññ'indriya*) predominates,⁴¹ in **the faith-follower**, the faculty of faith (*saddh'indriya*) predominates (MA 3:190).

However, as stated in **the Kiṭṭā,giri Sutta** (M 70), they have both “*not touched the liberations with the body*” [1.0.3.2], meaning they have *not* personally tasted moments of spiritual freedom (such as attaining dhyana) through their mindfulness, so that “they *still* have to do their tasks with diligence.”⁴²

³⁵ *Idha bhikkhave ekacco puggalo ye te santā vimokhā atikkamma rūpe āruppā te na kāyena phassitvā viharati, paññāya c'assa disvā āsavā aparikkhīnā honti. Tathāgate c'assa saddhā,mattam hoti pema,mattam, api c'assa ime dhammā honti seyyathidaṃ saddh'indriyam viriy'indriyam sat'indriyam samādh'indriyam paññ'indriyam.*

³⁶ *Tathāgatassa c'assa saddhā,mattam hoti pema,mattam.* See [1.1.1.1] n at the end of M 22 qu.

³⁷ Although not specifically mentioned in the Sutta itself, this section describes the faith-follower.

³⁸ “Just a bit of faith ... just a bit of love,” *saddhā,mattam hoti pema,mattam.* See [1.1.1.1] n at the end of M 22 qu.

³⁹ This means that he might even have *blind faith*, but insofar as he is restrained by the 5 precepts, he will still be a morally virtuous person and progress spiritually. However, since he lacks wisdom, he might easily be exploited by an unscrupulous guru or misled by a foolish teacher.

⁴⁰ I think this is Comy's way of saying that they are assured of streamwinning in a matter of time (MA 3:190); see also PugA 194 (on Pug 1.35-36).

⁴¹ *Paññā,pubbaṅgamam* (MA 3:190).

⁴² See M 70,20-21/1:479 (SD 11.1); also Pug 1.35 f/15; Vism 21.75.

1.4.2 The 10 suttas of the **Okkanta Sāmyutta** (S 25)⁴³ discuss the differences between the truth-follower and the faith-follower. These 10 suttas treat the *impermanent* nature of the senses, their objects, their respective consciousnesses, etc, as something in which the faith-follower “has faith and firmly believes” (*saddahati adhimuccati*),⁴⁴ while the truth-follower “accepts these truths after just some pondering over them with wisdom” (*paññāya mattaso nijjhānaṃ khamanti*).⁴⁵ In other words, while the faith-follower is simply convinced of this truth, the truth-follower investigates and then accepts the truth of impermanence with wisdom.

The faith-follower does not merely have faith in the Buddha (as a “person”) but, more importantly, he is convinced of the truth of the teachings. The same is also clear from **the Puggala Paññatti** definition of these 2 individuals. Both are said to be *on the way to streamwinning*: while the truth-follower cultivates the path by putting **wisdom** first, taking it as his vehicle (*paññā, vāhiṃ paññā, pubbaṅgamā ariya, maggaṃ bhāveti*), the faith-follower places **faith** first, taking it as his vehicle (*saddhā, vāhiṃ saddhā, pubbaṅgamā*) (Pug 15).

1.4.3 In the 5 short suttas of **the Indriya Sāmyutta** (S 48.12-17), these 2 types of individuals are listed at the end of the usual list of true individuals, in terms of how they are “freed,” that is, become full-fledged streamwinners. There, **the faith-follower** is placed *after the truth-follower* since the former’s spiritual faculties are weaker. The faith-follower and the truth-follower differ in their dominant *faculty*, that is, the faith-follower relies on *faith* as his mode of spiritual progress while the truth-follower relies on *wisdom*.

On attaining the fruit of streamwinning, the faith-follower becomes “**one freed by faith**” (*saddhā, vimutti*),⁴⁶ and the truth-follower, “**one attained by view**” (*diṭṭhi-p, patta*) or “view-attainer.”⁴⁷

What emerges from these different presentations is that though the faith-follower relies on the faculty of faith, he or she nevertheless also needs to develop wisdom, even though this development of wisdom will be to a lesser degree than the Dhamma-follower.

(Analayo 2005:221 at M 1:478)

1.4.4 Capacity for learning

1.4.4.1 The Abhidharma,kośa Bhāṣya,⁴⁸ throwing additional light on the 2 individuals, says that the truth-follower seeks the truth by himself in a *self-reliant* manner, guided in his meditation and practice mainly by his own sutta study (and wise reasoning). The faith-follower does the same, but under the guidance of *a teacher*.⁴⁹ Their difference here is in **the capacity for learning**, as, for example, explained in **the Ugghaṭitaññū Sutta** (A 4.143), which defines the 4 kinds of individuals in terms of their capacity for learning, thus:

- (1) **a quick learner** (*ugghaṭitaññū*): an individual who penetrates the Dharma (as teaching or as truth) *the moment it is spoken*;
- (2) **a diffuse learner** (*vipacitaññū*): an individual who penetrates the Dharma that is spoken in brief, when its meaning is *being analysed in detail*;

⁴³ S 25.1-10/3:225-228.

⁴⁴ S 25.1/3:225,9.

⁴⁵ S 25.1/3:225,16.

⁴⁶ *Saddhā, vimutta*, see **Kīṭāgiri S** (M 70,20/1:478,29-34), SD 11.1.

⁴⁷ *Diṭṭhi-p, patta*, see **Kīṭāgiri S** (M 70,19/1:478,18-23), SD 11.1.

⁴⁸ Vasubandhu’s auto-commentary on his Abhidharma,kośa (5th cent, NW India).

⁴⁹ Abhk 6.29a-b & 6.63a-c29 = Abhk (ed Pradhan) 353,14; see Abhk:Pr 1989:952, 1016.

- (3) **one who is tractable** (*neyya*): an individual who need guidance so that in stages, he realizes the Dharma through recitation, questioning, wise attention and by associating with, serving and waiting upon spiritual friends; and
- (4) **a word learner** (*pada,parama*): an individual who, though listening much, reciting much, remembers much, speaking much, penetrates not the Dharma; at best, he only knows some teachings on a mere word level. (Pug 4.5/2:135), SD 3.13(3.3)

1.4.4.2 In terms of capacity for learning, then, a **truth-follower** is likely to be a “quick learner” (*uggha-ṭitaññū*) if he is very wise. Just listening once or by self-study, he is able to understand a teaching properly as a support for his practice.

Even when he is not very wise or when a teaching is difficult, he is able to understand it with some explanation. In other words, he is at least a “diffuse learner” (*vipacitaññū*). He is the kind of student who will search the suttas, question wise teachers, and apply his wisdom and reasoning to understand a difficult teaching. [1.4.4.1]

1.4.4.3 In the case of a **faith-follower**, if he has a good level of wisdom, he is likely to be a “tractable learner” (*neyya*), that is, one who needs the guidance of a good teacher. If he lack wisdom and spurred on only by faith, then, he is said to be “word learner” (*pada,parama*), who has learning difficulties and a very short attention span. In terms of learning, he is able, at best, to remember some teachings on a *word* level.

1.4.5 The aspirant and the goal

1.4.5.1 The ancient elders (*porāṇaka therā*)—a broad term for wise teachers who uphold the teachings of early Buddhism—speak highly of the streamwinner. After all, it is the very first real step on the path of awakening. If we fail to at least aspire to attain streamwinning in this life itself, it is unlikely for us to get this opportunity again in a very long time. Besides, on account of our lack of spiritual insight and moral courage, we are likely to be reborn in some subhuman state [1.7.3.3].

So vital it is for us to work for streamwinning in this life itself that these ancient elders speak of it in poetic praise. For example, even streamwinning of the path (the state of a streamwinner-to-be) is called an “**aeon-stopper**” [1.4.5.2], and when we aspire to streamwinning through wisdom (searching the suttas and investigating about impermanence) or simply through faith (in the fact that impermanence is universally real and true), we are called “**lesser streamwinners**” [1.6.2].

1.4.5.2 When the aspirant to the path of awakening reaches the path, he is a streamwinner. **The Pug-gala Paññatti** calls the streamwinner of the path (*sotāpanna magga*) an “**aeon-stopper**” (*ṭhita,kappī*): “Should this person, practising for the realization of the fruit of streamwinning, and if it were the time for the burning-up of the aeon, it would not burn up until that person realizes the fruit of streamwinning.” (Pug 1.20/13).⁵⁰ This statement means that even when the world is coming to an end, we would surely attain streamwinning just before that, especially when this event is a cosmic manifestation of impermanence!

Moreover, it is **the mind**, not the body, that “descends” into the counter-stream of awakening. The body comprises the 4 elements—earth, water, fire, wind—which comprise the world, too. This is the world that is undergoing destruction, disintegrating and settling down. The flux is now stasis, where there is no flux, there are no 4 elements (their physical manifestations): they are really the same thing.

⁵⁰ Qu at KhpA 181; SnA 1:278; ThīA 278; PmA 137; Vism 21.76/659.

1.4.5.3 “Aeon-stopper” (*thita,kappī*) is a rare Abhidhamma term, which I think should be taken as a figure of speech. A better way of understanding the meaning of *thita,kappī* is connected with the Dharma virtue of being “time-free” (*akalika*).⁵¹ Since **true reality** is characterized by impermanence, here the notion of “impermanence” itself becomes meaningless when we are free from the notion of **time** itself.

For, the mind of a streamwinner is the open door to the path that ends in the final freedom from temporality (time and impermanence). Without time, there is neither birth nor death, nor suffering. This is **nirvana**, the death-free.

In this sense, we can happily imagine how becoming a streamwinner **stops the “aeon”** (*kappa*), the cycle of the rebirths and re-deaths. Samsara is overcome: as a streamwinner we are on the path that gradually frees us. This graduality is itself the slowing down of samsaric time, of a world where the mind measures subject and object. Being a streamwinner means we now have the sight that sees ever clearer how we create time and becomes its victim and prisoner. But we are *now* free! In this sense, the Dharma as true reality is “**seen here and now**” (*sandiṭṭhika*).⁵²

1.5 AWAKENING IS A GRADUAL PROCESS

1.5.1 The faith-follower and the truth-follower

1.5.1.1 According to the Theravada Abhidhamma system, the faith-follower (*saddhā’nusārī*) or the truth-follower (*dhammānusārī*) exists for only a mind-moment, and the fruit-moment follows immediately. They then immediately become “freed by faith” (*saddhā,vimutta*) and “vision-attained” (*diṭṭhi-p,patta*), respectively.⁵³ Sutta silence on this point is *not* evidence for such individuals to be only “momentary” beings! In fact, we have sutta evidence to the contrary.

The state of a non-return of the path is not a “moment,” as stated in the Abhidhamma tradition, but, in this case, lasts half an aeon.⁵⁴ Further, in **the Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 142), there is mention of alms being given to the 8 kinds of saints, that is, an arhat, an arhat-to-be, a non-returner, a non-returner-to-be, a once-returner, a once-returner-to-be, a streamwinner and a streamwinner-to-be. This shows that the saints-to-be (those “on the path”)—because *they must take time to consume their meals*—are not mere mind-moments (as claimed by the Abhidhammikas) but last for a significant duration.⁵⁵ [1.5.3]

1.1.5.2 The essential difference between the faith-follower and the truth-follower is that the former has weak (*mudu*) faculties, while the latter has strong or “sharp” (*tikkha*) faculties.⁵⁶ But from **the (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta** (S 25.1) and the other suttas of the same Sāmyutta, it is clear that both the faith-follower and the truth-follower, although distinguished from the streamwinner, will similarly attain streamwinning in this life itself.⁵⁷ [1.2-1.4; 1.5.2]

⁵¹ On the Dharma as true reality as being *akālika*, see SD 15.9 (2.3).

⁵² On the Dharma as true reality as *sandiṭṭhika*, see SD 15.9 (2.2).

⁵³ Vism 21.75/659; Abhidharma,kośa(bhāṣya) (ed P Pradhan, Patna) 1967:353; Abhidharma,hṛdaya (tr I Armelin, Paris) 1978:73-75. On spiritual faculties and the saints, see **Āpaṇa S** (S 48.50), SD 10.4 (3.1.1).

⁵⁴ An aeon (*kappa*) is a world-cycle: see SD 2.19 (9) & SD 49.8 (15.2).

⁵⁵ See **Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga S** (M 142,3-10) n, esp §5 n (SD 1.9); SD 2.3 (1.1.3.2). Cf **(Hatthi,gāmaka) Ugga S** (A 8.22), where Ugga similarly offers alms to monks who have variously attained some level of sainthood (A 8.22,10), SD 45.15. On the gradual nature of awakening, see SD 49.14 (4).

⁵⁶ The Sarvāstī,vāda system says that the faith-follower and the truth-follower will last only for 15 mind-moments: Abhidharma,kośa(bhāṣya) (ed P Pradhan, Patna) 1967:353; Abhidharma,hṛdaya (tr I Armelin, Paris) 1978:75. The ref to *indriya* as *mudu* or *tikkha*, Gethin notes, “is not quite explicit in the Pāli sources, but is clearly enough indicated.” see MA 2:190; SA 3:235; PugA 193 f.

⁵⁷ S 25.1-10/3:225-228.

Like the streamwinner, they are not liable to be reborn into subhuman states,⁵⁸ and they have passed beyond the level of the worldling. Finally, it is said that they would not die without realizing the fruit of streamwinning [§§4-5].

1.5.2 The Kīṭa,gi Sutta (M 70) lists the faith-follower and the truth-follower as the last two of the 7 individuals.⁵⁹ The truth-follower is described as “one who accepts the truths proclaimed by the Tathagata after just some pondering over them with wisdom.”⁶⁰ He is also said to have the 5 faculties of faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom.⁶¹ The faith-follower, on the other hand, has only “just a bit of faith in, just a bit of love for the Tathagata”⁶² but he, too, has the 5 faculties.

Both the truth-follower and the faith-follower see by means of their *wisdom* that their mental influxes (*āsava*)—sense-desire, views, existence, and ignorance—are not yet destroyed.⁶³ Of either of them, the Buddha declares, “Seeing this fruit of diligence for such a monk, I say that he still has to do his duties with diligence,”⁶⁴ that is to say:

When the venerable one makes use of a suitable dwelling, and
 associates with spiritual friends, and harmonizes his spiritual faculties,
 he would, by realizing for himself, through direct knowledge here and now
 attain and dwell in that supreme goal of the holy life for the sake of which sons of family
 rightly go forth from the household life into the homeless life.⁶⁵

(M 70,20+21/1:479 f), SD 11.1

1.5.3 Sustained existence. As the faith-follower and the truth-follower, both of whom “make use of a suitable dwelling, and associates with spiritual friends, and balances his spiritual faculties, etc,” it is simply inappropriate to speak of either of them as existing only momentarily!⁶⁶ [1.5.1.1]. Furthermore, we have an interesting account in the **(Hatthi,gāma) Ugga Sutta** (A 8.22), where the master giver **Ugga** speaks of his unbiased open joy in giving:

It is not strange at all, bhante, that when the sangha has been invited by me, deities would approach me, saying,

“Houselord,

such and such a monk is freed both ways;

such and such a monk is wisdom-freed;

such and such a monk is a body-witness;

such and such a monk is view-attained;

such and such a monk is one faith-freed;

ubhato,bhāga,vimutta

paññā,vimutta

kāya,sakkhī

diṭṭhi-p,patta

saddhā,vimutta

⁵⁸ Anātha,piṇḍika, eg, dies a streamwinner and is reborn amongst the Tusita devas: see **(Sotāpatti) Anātha,piṇḍika S 2** (S 55.27/5:385-387), SD 23.2b.

⁵⁹ SD 11.1 (5.2): the truth-follower (5.2.8); the faith-follower (5.2.9).

⁶⁰ *Tathāgata-p,paveditā c’assa dhammā paññāya mattaso nijjhānaṃ khamanti* (**Kīṭa,gi S**, M 70,20/1:473; **Sarākāṇi S 1**, S 55.24/5:377; **Saraṇ’ānisaṃsa S 2**, S 55.25/5:379). The abs n for *nijjhānaṃ khamati* is *nijjhāna-k,khanti* (“being convinced after pondering on it”), such as in the term *diṭṭhi,nijjhāna-k,khanti*: which see Intro 3.3(5).

⁶¹ *Api c’assa ime dhammā honti seyyathīdarā saddh’indriyaṃ viriy’indriyaṃ sati’indriyaṃ samādh’indriyaṃ paññ’indriyaṃ* (**Kīṭa,gi S**, M 70,20/1:473; **Sarākāṇi S 1**, S 55.24/5:377; **Saraṇ’ānisaṃsa S 2**, S 55.25/5:379).

⁶² *Tathāgatassa c’assa saddhā,mattarā hoti pema,mattarā*. See [1.1.1.1] n at the end of M 22 qu.

⁶³ *Paññāya assa disvā āsavā aparikkhīṇā honti* (M 70,15-19/1:477-480), SD 11.1.

⁶⁴ M 70,20-21/1:479 (SD 11.1).

⁶⁵ See SD 11.1 (5.2.8); also SD 3.6 (4.2.3).

⁶⁶ This equally applies to all the other 5 of the 7 individuals who “still have to do his duties with diligence”—all of which the Abhidhamma tradition says, are of momentary existence [§1.5.1 here]. See also Gethin 2001:131-133.

such and such a monk is a truth-follower;
 such and such a monk is a faith-follower;
 such and such a monk is morally virtuous good in character;
 such and such a monk is immoral bad in character.

dhammānusārī
saddhā'nusārī
sīlavā kalyāṇa,dhamma
dussīla pāpa,dhamma

I do not recall it ever occurring to my mind, thus:

'Let me give this one little; let me give this one much.'

Rather, bhante, I give with just the same heart.⁶⁷

(A 8.22,10/4:215), SD 45.15

Obviously, if a faith-follower or a truth-follower can have his almsfood in an alms-giving in a devotee's house, he could *not* be existing for only a mind-moment!

1.5.4 Gradual change

1.5.4.1 All this goes to show the change in the faith-follower and the truth-follower—from the path to its fruition—is not a sudden flash but a gradual process (or perhaps a gradual process ending in a sudden flash). The observation of insightful scholars like **Rupert Gethin** is instructive:

The *suttas* of the Nikāyas are presented in the first place as the prescriptions of the Buddha applicable to particular occasions. They characteristically progress from their particular starting points via a particular course of practice or teaching towards the final goal of complete awakening. To this extent the Nikāyas can be seen as drawing attention to the gradual stage by stage nature of the process to awakening. (2001:133)

1.5.4.2 Finally, we have the Buddha-word on the gradual path:

Bhikshus, I do not say that final knowledge is achieved all at once. On the contrary, final knowledge is achieved by gradual training, by gradual practice, by gradual progress.⁶⁸

And how, bhikshus, is final knowledge achieved by gradual training, by gradual practice, by gradual progress? [The 12-stage training then follows.]⁶⁹ (M 70,22-23/1:479 f), SD 11.1

1.5.5 The truth-follower and the faith-follower—a comparison. The comparative qualities of these 2 individuals as described in **the Sarakāni Sutta 1 + 2** (S 55.24+25) have been summarized in **SD 3.6 (2)** (qv). Here is a more comprehensive survey of their comparative qualities as described in the following suttas:

1	Alagaddūpama Sutta	M 22/1:143	SD 3.13
2	Kiṭṭhā, giri Sutta	M 70/1:479	SD 11.1
3	(Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta	S 25.1/3:225	SD 16.7
4	Sarakāni Suttas 1	S 55.24/4:375-377	SD 3.6
5	Sarakāni Suttas 2	S 55.25/4:377-380	SD 77.8

⁶⁷ Here, Ugga is giving to all the monks as a sangha (A 8.22,10/4:215), SD 45.15, which is also characteristic of “the true individual’s giving”: see **Sappurisa, dāna S** (A 5.148/3:172 f @ SD 22.15 (2)). Elsewhere, the disciple is admonished to practise “discriminate giving” (*viceyya, dāna*), ie, giving to the giftworthy first: see eg **Sādhu S** (S 1.33/1:20-22), SD 22.10c; (**Dāna) Vaccha, gotta S** (A 3.57/1:160-162 @ SD 22.12 (2)); **Āditta J** (J 424), SD 22.10a (1.3).

⁶⁸ This whole para: *Nāham bhikkhave ādiken’eva aññ’ārādhanam vadāmi, api na bhikkhave anupubba, sikkhā anupubba, kiriyā anupubba, paṭipadā aññ’ārādhanā hoti.*

⁶⁹ The 12-stage learning process is also found in **Caṅkī S** (M 95), SD 21.15, first in the normal sequence (M 95,20/-2:173) and then in the reverse (M 95,21.2/2:174). Cf A 4:336, 5:154. Further see SD 45.15 (3) The path is gradual.

SUTTA KEY: Column numbers refer to sutta sections.

The truth-follower (<i>dhammānusārī</i>)	1 §	2 §	3 §	4+5 §	The faith-follower (<i>saddhā'nusārī</i>)	1 §	2 §	3 §	4+5 §
(a) has <i>no faith</i> in the 3 jewels				11	(a) (same)				12
(b) <i>no</i> arhat's wisdom, no liberation		20		11	(b) (same)		21		12
(c) <i>has</i> the 5 faculties;		20		11	(c) (same)		21		12
(d) accepts truths " after just some pondering over ... with wisdom "		20	5	11	(d) has " faith ... firmly believes these truths "			4	
(e) (same as (d))				"	(e) "with just a bit of faith/love"	*	21		12
(e) incapable of bad karma			5		(e) (same)			4	
(f) "goes not" to subhuman states			5	11	(f) (same)			4	12
(g) still has to do his task diligently		20			(g) (same)		21		
(h) "descending" into the path			5		(h) (same)			4	
(i) gains streamwinning in this life			5		(i) (same)			4	
(j) bound for "awakening"	46				(j) (same)	46			

Table 1.5.5. A comparative table of qualities of the truth-follower and the faith-follower

A summary of Sutta definitions: The header numbers refer to the Suttas mentioned in the Table.

1 **Alaggadūpama S** (M 22). "In the teaching ... there are truth-followers and faith-followers, *all bound for awakening.*"⁷⁰

1* **Alaggadūpama S** (M 22). "With just a bit of faith/love, *all bound for heaven,*"⁷¹ ie, those who do not practise.

2 **Kitā, giri Sutta** (M 70)

Truth-follower: "... dwells not having touched with the body (the formless dhyanas) ... mental influxes are not yet destroyed ... (accepts the teaching) with just some pondering over them with wisdom ... he has (the 5 faculties) – he still has to do his task with diligence." (M 70,21)

Faith-follower: Same as preceding, except for "but he has just a bit of faith for the Tathagata, just a bit of love."

3 **(Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta** (S 25.1)

Truth-follower: "... (accepts the teaching) with just some pondering over them with wisdom ... descending into the certainty of rightness ... incapable of doing any intentional deed by which he might be reborn in hell, or in the animal birth, or in the preta state ... incapable of dying without having attained the fruit of streamwinning."

Faith-follower: Same as in preceding, except for "... who has faith thus, who **firmly believes** these truths."

4+5 **Sarakāni Sutta 1** (S 55.24) + **Sarakāni Sutta 2** (S 55.25)

Truth-follower: "... does not have wise faith (in the 3 jewels) ... neither one of joyous wisdom nor of quick wisdom, and has not attained liberation ... *has* (the 5 faculties) ... (accepts the teaching) with just some pondering over them with wisdom ... goes not to (the subhuman states)."

Faith-follower: Same as in preceding, except for "... has just a bit of **faith** in the Tathagata, just a bit of **love** for him."

⁷⁰ *Sambodhi, parāyanā.*

⁷¹ *Yesam mayi saddhā, mattam pema, mattam sabbe te sagga, parāyanā.*

1.6 SOME “TECHNICAL” POINTS

1.6.1 *Okkanto sammatta,niyāma* and other key phrases

1.6.1.1 The Commentary to **the (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta** explains *okkanto sammatta,niyāma* [§§4.2 + 5.2], the key phrase in the stock definition of streamwinning, as meaning, “(one who) had entered the noble path” (*okkanto sammatta,niyāman’ti pavitṭho ariya,maggam*, SA 2:346,18)—here referring to the 1st stage of the path.⁷² Translated this way, this is problematic since the Commentary glosses *okkanto* as *pavitṭho* (“had entered”), which is the past participle of *pavisati*, “to go in, enter.” This implies that one is already a streamwinner—which is *not* the case for the truth-follower and the faith-follower, referred to here.

This is an occasion when we must turn to **the “rule of context”**: the context must prevail over textual or grammatical technicality.⁷³ Now, we have a similar case in **the (Pañcaka) Nirodha Sutta** (A 5.166) where the text has the same past participle *okkanta* in the phrase, *sārajjam okkantam*, literally, “(had) descended into moral fear.” Confessing to Upavāna, Ānanda says that, in not speaking up for the elder Sāriputta when he is challenged by another monk, makes him (Ānanda) feel *morally fearful* (a close modern emotion would be “a sense of guilt”). Since Ānanda is speaking in the 1st person to Upavāna, the phrase *sārajjam okkantam* clearly has a progressive present context. Hence, Ānanda *means*: “Right now, I’m feeling a lack of moral courage!” (*idan’eva amhākaṃ sārajjam okkantan’ti*).⁷⁴ Following this principle—invoking the rule of contextuality—then, we should translate *okkanto sammatta,niyāmam* as “**descending into the certainty of rightness.**”

The truth is that in **Pali grammar** (as in English), there is an overlap between these two grammatical forms—in modern English grammar represented by the *-ing* participle (“descending”) and *-ed* perfect participle (“(has/had) descended”).⁷⁵ These two forms are not distinct in Pali as they are in English.⁷⁶ Hence, we need to carefully tease out the **context** to give the proper English translation. The context here dictates that we render *okkanto* as “descending” (participial) rather than “(has/had) descended” (perfect). The latter is inapplicable here since it would mean that one has/had become a streamwinner—which is not the case here.

1.6.1.2 Now let us apply what we know here to solve an interesting problem of Pali translation. Scholar monk, **Bodhi**, translates *okkanto sammatta,niyāmam* as “(one who) has entered the certainty of rightness” (emphases added) [§§4-5].⁷⁷ There are 2 translation problems here: (1) regarding “has” and (2) regarding “of.” We will first discuss the “**has**” problem first to follow up from the preceding note on *okkanto* [1.6.1.1]. Then, we will discuss the problem regarding “**of**” [1.6.1.3].

We earlier noted the problem with translating *okkanto sammatta,niyāmam* as “(one who) has entered the certainty of rightness” (emphasis added) [1.6.1.1]. Now, the translation is correct grammatically but it does *not* reflect the sutta **context**. The participle *okkanto* has been *literally* (mis)translated as a perfect-tense verb (“has ...-ed”) as “has entered.” This means that both the truth-follower and the faith-follower

⁷² See also PmA 3:697 f.

⁷³ On the rule of context, see SD 53.5 (4.2.3); SD 54.3b (2.3.2.3).

⁷⁴ A 5.166,35/3:195,8 (SD 47.15).

⁷⁵ Both the *-ing* and *-ed* participial forms are found in English: see Quirk et al, *Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*, 1985:3.4; *The Oxford Companion to the English Language*, 1992:751 f (participle). On the present and the past tenses in Pali being *contextual*, see SD 33.1b (6.2.2).

⁷⁶ Similarly, the *-ing* participle and the *-ed* participle are distinct in the languages of south Asia and SE Asia.

⁷⁷ Bodhi uses this tr for all the 10 suttas of S 25 (S:B 1:1004-1007). **F L Woodward** has wrongly conflated his tr, combining the two separate passages on the faith-follower and the truth-follower, and renders the phrase as “one who enters on the assurance of perfection” (S:W 3:177).

have attained the path, that is, become streamwinners, but they have not done so. They are, however, *preparing* to do so. In Bodhi's translation, what is "still going on" is mistaken to be "something that has been completed." The streamwinner-aspirants are taken to be actual streamwinners!

1.6.1.3 Next, we should note that, technically, *okkanta* [§§4.2 + 5.2] is a past participle.⁷⁸ However, the context refers to the progressive or continuous present, an on-going state, which we should translate it in the present participle, "is descending." The S 25.1 passages [§§4.2 + 5.2] describe the truth-follower and the faith-follower as those who are "approaching" the path (called *sammatta,niyāmaṃ*, "certainty of rightness" in the Sutta). Hence, we must render *okkanto sammatta,niyāmaṃ* as "(is/are) descending the certainty of rightness."

In Pali, the semantics or sense of a word is often contextual rather than *technical*. Take, for example, the common stock phrase, *ekaṃ samayaṃ bhagavā sāvatthiyaṃ viharati*: it literally translates "the Blessed One resides near (or at) Sāvattihī," but the usual idiomatic translation is "the Blessed One was residing near Sāvattihī."

Okkamati and its various forms are often used in connection with the attaining of streamwinning—as in embarking a boat on the river of rightness that goes upstream to the ancient city of nirvana. There is a whole Saṃyutta (set of connected teachings) entitled **the Okkanta Saṃyutta** (S 25),⁷⁹ dealing with this attaining of streamwinning in this life itself.

Both **the faith-follower** and **the truth-follower** are described as one who "has gone beyond the plane of the worldlings ... is descending into the plane of true individuals ... is *descending* into the certainty of rightness [the fixed course to rightness] ..." ⁸⁰ [§§4-5].⁸¹ They are *nearing* or approaching those states, but not exactly there yet. They are approaching the path of "rightness" (*sammatta*)⁸² (comprising the 8 fac-

⁷⁸ CPD: o-kkanta, mfn (past part of ¹okkamati; = *ava-/apa-, "down" + VKRAM, to go): 1 (a) descended, come down, transmitted; (b) descended into, esp with *kucchiṃ*, ie, attained rebirth; gone, come into; entered (a place or country); (c) passed into (a state): (i) with *niddaṃ*, ie, fallen asleep; (ii) with *middha*, ie, become drowsy; (iii) with *lajji, dhammaṃ*, ie, become ashamed; (iv) with *sārajjam* (with genitive of agent), ie, become dejected, despondent; (d) entered upon — 1 (a) *eso dhammo daṇḍānaṃ ~o purāṇo ahū*, Sn 312 (~o *ahū pavatto āsi*, SnA 324,9); — 1 (b) *yadā bodhisatto, mātu kucchiṃ ~o hoti* (D 2:12,22 f = M 3:120,22 f; *Sāmo .. .kumāro ... Parikāya tāpasīyā kucchiṃ ~o* (Miln 129,27); *ye keci sattā mātu, gabbhaṃ ~ā*, Miln 25,26 (ad Miln 127,31); *deva, manussesu ariyabhūmiṃ ~esu* (J 4:187,-4 = DhA 3:178,5; *te jānanti aññe ... bhikkhū antosīmaṃ ~ā ti*, V 1:132,10 ≈ 132,12 ≈ 132,14; *te na jāniṃsū ti sīmaṃ ~ā ti vā okkamantī ti vā na jāniṃsu*, VA 1064,24 (ad V 1:128,36); *~am taṃ tato Laṅke ... mahīpati abhisecayi*, Mahv 22,22; *tādise araññe ~e*, VA 913,1; — 1 (c) (i) *āsanaśālāya...nisinno bhikkhu niddaṃ ~o hoti*, VA 846,21; *keci niddaṃ ~ā*, J 6:446,21; MA 3:354,9; — (ii) *~e middhe ... supinaṃ passati*, Miln 299,13; — (iii) *lajji, dhammaṃ ~o*, VA 314,10 ≈ 314,12 (~ena); — (iv) *amhākaṃ sārajjam ~an ti*, A 3:195,8 (*sārajjam ~an ti domanassam anupaviṭṭham*, AA 3:299,-11; — 1 (d) *ayaṃ vuccati... ~o sammatta,niyāmaṃ sappurisa, bhūmiṃ ~o*, S 2:225,10-11 ≈ 225,17-18 ≈ 226,2-3 (~o *sammatta,niyāman ti pavīṭṭho ariya, maggaṃ*, SA 2:346,18); *sammatta,niyāmaṃ okkamati ti magga-k, khaṇe okkamati, phala-k, khaṇe pana ~o nāma hoti*, PmA 699,30 (ad Pm 2:238,19); *anariya, kammam ~am*, J 4:4:57,3* (*anariyānaṃ ... kammaṃ otaritvā ṭhitaṃ*, 57,31'); *tathā koci ekaṃ dassanaṃ okkamati, koci dve, koci tīṇi ... ekasmiṃ ~e pi, dvīsu, tīsu ~esu pi, niyata, micchā, ditthiko va hoti*, DA 166,31-167,1 (ad D 1:52,2 f).

⁷⁹ S 25.1-10/3:225-228.

⁸⁰ *Okkanto sammatta,niyāmaṃ sappurisa, bhūmiṃ okkanto vīti, vatto puthujjana, bhūmiṃ*.

⁸¹ We see this sense of an intermediate state in such expressions as *niddaṃ okkantaṃ* ("falling asleep") (SA 1:239; J 1:333, 399) and *niddaṃ okkanta, kāle* ("at the time of falling asleep") (DA 2:385; MA 5:10; J 2:247, 3:449, 5:438), both of which expresses a situation between being awake and being asleep. Similarly, *okkanta* here can express a sense of the faith-follower or the truth-follower leaving behind the state of being a worldling but not yet attaining the state of an arya (streamwinning).

⁸² *Sammatta* is the abstract n of "right" (*sammā*), which qualifies each of the 8 factors or limbs of the eightfold path.

tors),⁸³ that is also the gradual process of awakening. The “of” stresses the path as a *process*, that of “righting” oneself—until there is no more of this process of *righting* and all is “righted”—that is nirvana. [1.6.1.5]

1.6.1.4 Now we examine the problem regarding “of” [1.6.1.2]. **Aggacitta** (the abbot of Sasanarakkha Sanctuary, Malaysia) rightly thinks that Bodhi’s translation of *sammatta,niyāma* here as “the fixed course of rightness” (S:B 1005) (which the Commentary glosses as “the noble path”) is “self-contradictory,” since to say that the faith-follower and the truth-follower have “entered the fixed course of rightness” means that they *are* already streamwinners, but they are *not*. Hence, he suggests translating *sammatta,niyāma* as “the fixed course to rightness,” so that the translation reads “the faith-follower and the truth-follower have entered the fixed course to rightness.” (2007)

The problem here is actually in how we see “rightness” (*sammatta*)—whether as the *path* itself or as the *goal* of the path, nirvana. Rightness is a term for **the path** (*magga*) itself, which here has 2 inclusive senses: (1) the path of 8 right factors [1.6.1.3] and (2) the 4 kinds of sainthood or spiritually noble state, beginning with streamwinning.

“Rightness,” then, is the noble eightfold path itself, not nirvana. Rightness (*sammatta*), as we have noted [1.6.1.3], is the abstract noun for the nature of the path with 8 “right” (*sammā*) factors [1.6.1.3]. Hence, the path *itself* is the rightness: we can then speak of it as “the path of rightness” or “the path that is rightness.” The path is our own Dharma practice and transformation beginning with that of streamwinning.

If we say that it is “the path to rightness,” this implies that the path is not *rightness*, or that “rightness” is the goal, “nirvana”—then, we have confounded the path and the goal. In this sense, the translation, “the fixed course to rightness” or “the path to rightness” is self-contradictory: “rightness” seems to be taken as “nirvana,” and yet “rightness” leads to nirvana!

Rightness is the noble eightfold path itself, comprising the 8 right factors [1.6.1.3]. Since the path is made up of factors, it is conditioned (*saṅkhata*). Nirvana, on the other hand, is unconditioned (*asaṅkhata*); it is beyond wrongness (*micchatta*) and rightness (*sammatta*). In short, it is the path of rightness that leads to nirvana. The “certainty of rightness,” then, refers to the fact that we are sure of reaching the path.

In fact, it is less problematic when we translate *niyama* as “certainty,” rather than “the fixed course.” It makes good sense to speak of “**the certainty of rightness**” (*sammatta,niyāma*). It’s not about “going” anywhere since the path refers to the abandoning of the 10 fetters.⁸⁴ When these fetters are all broken, *that* is nirvana. The path itself, so to speak, *becomes* the goal (in stages): it is the path of awakening, the gradual seeing of true reality. This is one sense—even the most important—of Buddhaghosa’s statement, “There is the path, no one who goes (on it)” (*maggaṃ atthi, gamako na vijjati*) (Vism 16.90d/513,3 f).⁸⁵

1.6.1.5 The Sutta says that both the truth-follower and the faith-follower “**have gone beyond the plane of worldlings**” [§§4.2 + 5.2]. What does it mean to say they have “**gone beyond**” (*vīti,vatto*) being worldlings (*puthujjanā*) [§§4.2 + 5.2]? **Vīti,vatta** is derived from *vīti* (“gone beyond”) + *vatta* (“that which has happened”) (past participle of *vattati*, “it happens”). The faith-follower and the truth-follower are, in other words, no more worldlings—specifically, not *blind* worldlings—still not yet streamwinners, but are moving in that *right* direction.

In other words, the phrase, “gone beyond,” describes the first step, as it were, that we take—we leave behind the world with its crowdedness and tribalism—by aspiring for streamwinning. Once we let go of the world, we naturally gravitate towards the *path* of awakening or the *stream* of nobility that heads for

⁸³ The 8 factors (*aṅga*) of the noble path are: right view (*sammā diṭṭhi*), right intention (*sammā saṅkappa*), right speech (*sammā vācā*), right action (*sammā kammantā*), right livelihood (*sammā ājīva*), right effort (*sammā vāyāma*), right mindfulness (*sammā sati*), and right concentration (*sammā samādhi*): SD 10.16 (1.8. 2-8).

⁸⁴ See last n of (1.7.2.2).

⁸⁵ For the full verse, see SD 2.16 (17).

nirvana. In the parable of the boat, we “descend” into the boat, which then moves “against the stream” (*paṭisotā, gāmī*) of worldliness, upstream to the ancient city of nirvana.⁸⁶

We will highlight the primacy of this “**gone beyond**” as the first step in the aspiring for streamwinning below: [1.6.4(3)].

1.6.1.6 Finally, we should look at the clause, “**he is incapable of dying without having attained the fruit of streamwinning**” [§§4.4 + 5.4]. The Saṃyutta Commentary says that once the path has arisen, there can be no obstruction to the fruit (SA 2:346,21). The path “has arisen” on account of our having habitually reflected on impermanence (or done some other proper Dharma practice) so that our mind is free from the 3 fetters of narcissism, and undistracted by doubt or superstition [1.7.2.2], but is firmly guided by a vision of true reality. We have become streamwinners.

1.6.2 The lesser streamwinner

1.6.2.1 The ancient elders (*porāṇakā therā*), notes the Majjhima Commentary, call such a spiritually developing person (who is “descending into the certainty of rightness”) a “**lesser streamwinner**” (*cūla, sotāpanna*)⁸⁷ or “maturing streamwinner” (*bāla, sotāpanna*).⁸⁸ This is a late technical term for one who, in the spirit of **the Okkanta Saṃyutta** (S 25),⁸⁹ properly practising the perception of impermanence, is assured of attaining streamwinning within this life itself. Simply, he is an aspirant to streamwinning who habitually keeps the moral precepts of wholesome action and speech, and practises the mindfulness of impermanence, with a growing understanding or acceptance of the impermanence aspect of true reality.

The lesser streamwinner—clearly here a reference to either the faith-follower or the truth-follower—is said to be descending on the course of “rightness” (*sammattā*), which here refers to the supramundane eightfold path, that of the saints. These two individuals are spiritual attainers who are *not* yet aryas, as suggested by **the Sammatta Niyāma Suttas 1-3** (A 5.151-153).⁹⁰ Actually, these 3 Suttas describe the training of the faith-follower and the truth-follower, that is, the lesser streamwinners. This training expedites their attaining streamwinning in this life itself.

1.6.2.2 Who really is **the lesser streamwinner** (*cūla, sotāpanna* or *cullaka sotāpanna*)? Both Buddhaghosa’s **Visuddhi, magga** (Vism) and Dhammapāla’s **Abhidhammāvatāra** (Abhdv) mention the lesser streamwinner at the conclusion of the “purification by passing beyond doubt” (*kaṅkhā, vitaraṇa, visuddhi*). In the scheme of the 7 purifications (*satta, visuddhi*), the lesser streamwinner is the fulfillment of **the 4th purification**.⁹¹

Now one of insight possessed of this knowledge (of the passing beyond doubt) is one who has found solace in the Buddha’s teaching, who has a footing, whose destiny is sure—he is called a **lesser streamwinner**.
(Vism 19.27/605; cf Abhdv 119)

⁸⁶ On *paṭisotā, gāmī*, see SD 29.6a (1.5.2); SD 34.5 (3.1). On the ancient city, see **Nagara S** (S 12.65,19-33), SD 14.2.

⁸⁷ Also spelt *culla, sotāpanna* or *culla, sotāpannaka*.

⁸⁸ MA 2:120; VbhA 254; cf Vism 605/29.27. See Gethin 2001:136 f.

⁸⁹ S 25.1-10/3:225-228.

⁹⁰ A 5.151-153/3:174-176 (SD 4.2-4). On *sammatta* (rightness), see **Mahā Cattārīsaka S** (M 117,34), SD 6.10.

⁹¹ The 7 purifications (*satta, visuddhi*) are: (1) purification of moral virtue (*sīla, visuddhi*); (2) purification of mind (*citta, visuddhi*); (3) purification of view (*diṭṭhi, visuddhi*); (4) purification by crossing over doubt (*kaṅkhā, vitaraṇa, visuddhi*); (5) purification by the knowledge and vision of the path and the not-path (*maggāmagga, ñāṇa, dassana, visuddhi*); (6) purification by the knowledge and vision of progress (*paṭipadā, ñāṇa, dassana, visuddhi*); (7) purification by knowledge and vision (*ñāṇa, dassana, visuddhi*) (**Ratha, vinīta S**, M 24,8-15/1:147-149; Vism 1-710). For details, see **Bhāvanā**, SD 15.1(11);

1.6.2.3 The suttas often associate the overcoming of doubt (*vicikicchā*) and the possession of wise faith (*saddhā*) with streamwinning.⁹² The Commentators further state that **the lesser streamwinner** is one whose destiny is certain—they will gain streamwinning in this life itself.

All this is reminiscent of the Nikāya definitions of the faith-follower and the truth-follower. However, according to the Abhidhamma tradition, both of them have *not* fulfilled **the 4th purification** (that of overcoming doubt), and have not totally abandoned the 3 fetters,⁹³ especially doubt (*vicikicchā*) [1.7.2.2]. **Gethin**, however, notes that, “Possibly in this context *kāṅkhā* should be understood as doubt in its grosser manifestations and *vicikicchā* as rather more subtle doubt” (2001:137 n138).

1.6.2.4 Apparently, in the scheme of the 7 purifications, the fulfillment of the 4th stage—the overcoming of doubt—marks the beginning of the process culminating in the supramundane path of streamwinning proper. **The lesser streamwinner** (*cūḷa sotāpanna*) refers here, I think, to the practitioner who is purified (on a mundane level) with regards to his moral virtue, mental concentration and wisdom, which are, in fact, the first 3 purifications. The path of streamwinning then follows, as noted by **Gethin**, thus:

One might then put it that, loosely speaking, the path of stream-attainment extends from the conclusion of the fourth purification (ie the acquisition of the knowledge that causes one to pass beyond doubt) up to the seventh purification (“by knowledge and seeing”). (2001:137)

1.6.3 The lesser streamwinner and the spiritual faculties

1.6.3.1 In the light of what has been discussed so far, let me venture to say that the lesser streamwinner [1.6.2] is still a worldling (*puthujjana*), but he is a “good worldling” (*kalyāna puthujjana*), that is:

one who dwells practising in full accordance with the Dharma, accomplished in moral virtue, with sense-doors guarded, moderate in food, devoted to watchfulness night after night, devoted to the cultivation of the states of the limbs of awakening, thinking, “I will attain one or other of the fruits of recluship today or tomorrow.” (MA 1:40; ItA 1:61)

1.6.3.2 Now both the faith-follower and the truth-follower have all the 5 faculties (*indriya*).⁹⁴ However, it has been stated that the worldling does not have them, and **the Paṭipanna Sutta** (S 47.18) says that

The one who is in every way and everywhere wholly without these 5 faculties, him I declare an outsider, one who stands in the ranks of the worldling. (S 47.18,4/5:202)

Here, in the Paṭipanna Sutta, the faculties are exclusively supramundane, where “worldling” probably means “blind worldling” (*andha puthujjana*), one who lacks moral fibre, mental calmness and spiritual vision. As noted by **Bodhi**,

⁹² See eg **Caṇḍāla S** (A 5.175/3:206); **(Upāsaka) Parābhava S** (A 5.176/4:26); **Kiñci Saṅkhāra S** (A 6.93/3:439), SD 12.14; **(Sotāpanna) Ānisaṃsa S** (A 6.97/3:441), SD 3.3(4.4); **Parihāna S** (A 7.27/4:25), also called Hani S. See also SD 8.6 (14.2); SD 12.14 (2).

⁹³ Ie, self-identity view (*sakkāya,diṭṭhi*), spiritual doubt (*vicikicchā*) and attachment to rituals and vows (*sīla-b,bata,-parāmāsa*) (S 5:61; A 5.13; Vbh 377). See **Laymen saints**, SD 8.6 (12).

⁹⁴ The 5 faculties (*pañc’indriya*) are: (1) faith, (2) effort, (3) mindfulness, (4) concentration and (5) wisdom; see **Pañc’indriya**, SD 10.4; SD 3.6 (3).

Despite the statement here restricting the faculties to those at the minimum level of path-attainer, the Pāli tradition, beginning with the Abhidhamma, regards the faculties as general wholesome capacities also possessed by worldlings. Some of the other early Buddhist schools were more stringent. (S:B 1932 n202)

In other words, we can say that the lesser streamwinner *does* have some level of the 5 faculties, although they may not be fully developed, but certainly he is *unlike the blind worldling*, who lacks all the faculties.⁹⁵ As such, with sustained practice, the lesser streamwinner is well on the way to gain stream-winning in this life itself, as guaranteed in **the (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta** (S 25.1) and the other 9 suttas of the same Saṃyutta.⁹⁶

1.6.3.3 The Vibhaṅga Commentary, on the other hand, describes a lesser streamwinner in Abhidhamma terms, as one who understands that name-and-form is not produced without causes and conditions. He goes on to ask what these causes and conditions are, and defines them thus: “With ignorance as condition, craving as condition, karma as condition, food as condition.”⁹⁷ And he is without doubt that these are conditions that arise interdependently in the past, in the future, and even now.

Beyond that there is no being or person, but only a heap of formations. This insight is called “the full understanding of the known” (*ñāta, pariññā*).⁹⁸ And under the right conditions, he would be able, in one session, to attain arhathood—by applying the 3 characteristics and comprehending the formations with a series of insights. (VbhA 1173 f/254)

1.6.4 The principle of “verbal phrase reversal”

1.6.4.1 Now, an important note on **how to properly translate** this important sentence that describes the process of our approaching the path as truth-followers or faith-followers:

Okkanto sammatta, niyāmaṃ, sappurisa, bhūmiṃ okkanto, vīti, vatto puthujjana, bhūmiṃ. [§§4.2+5.2]

Here is a literal translation of the Pali sentence (which follows the same semantic sequence as the Pali):

<i>Okkanto sammatta, niyāmaṃ</i>	(1) “He is descending into the certainty of rightness ... ;”
<i>sappurisa, bhūmiṃ okkanto</i>	(2) “ ... <u>descending</u> into the plane of true individual.”
<i>vīti, vatto puthujjana, bhūmiṃ</i>	(3) “He has gone beyond the plane of the worldlings.”

⁹⁵ On the faculties (*indriya*), see Gethin 2001:126-138.

⁹⁶ S 25.1-10/3:225-228 (SD 16.7).

⁹⁷ Pm 1.286/1:55.

⁹⁸ *Ñāta, pariññā* is one of the 3 kinds of mundane (*lokiya*) full understanding (**pariññā**): (1) the full understanding of the known (*ñāta, pariññā*); (2) the full understanding as investigating (*tīraṇa, pariññā*); and (3) the full understanding as overcoming (*pahāna, pariññā*) (Nm 53; Pm 1.87). They are defined by **Buddhaghosa** as follows: (1) “the full understanding of the known” is the knowledge regarding the discernment of specific characteristics of phenomena, such as: “Form has the characteristic of being molested (*ruppana*); feeling has the characteristic of being felt.” (2) “The full understanding as investigating” is the insight with the general characteristics (impermanence, suffering, non-self) as its object regarding those same phenomena, beginning thus: “Form is impermanent; feeling is impermanent.” (3) “The full understanding as abandoning” is the insight with the characteristics as its object that occurs as the *abandoning* of the perception of permanence, etc, regarding the same phenomena. (Vism 20.3/606 f). In simple terms: (1) is the observing of the *external* characteristics of things and events; (2) is a deeper examining of the *inner* aspects of these same things and events; and (3) is the *letting go* of them through noticing their true nature.

This translation is *awkward* because it puts **the goal** (“rightness,” that is, the noble eightfold path) first, and how this should be done, *later*. The “conventional” or worldly phrase referring to “the worldlings,” **the unawakened crowd**, is put last, making it seem to be the goal or giving it undeserved prominence!

1.6.4.2 Here, following the principle of the “reversed sequence of verbal phrases,” we contextually translate the 3 key parts of the Pali sentence [1.6.4.1] into idiomatic English (that is, a contextual translation), as follows:

“(3) He has gone beyond the plane of the worldlings. (2) He is descending into the plane of **true individuals**; (1) *descending* into the certainty of **rightness** [the fixed course to rightness].”
 (1) *Okkanto sammatta, niyāmaṃ*, (2) *sappurisa, bhūmiṃ okkanto*, (3) *vīti, vatto puthujjana, bhūmiṃ*.
 [§§4.2+5.2]

Here, we can see the natural sequence of spiritual progress in the English translation (which the Pali contexts *means*), thus:

He has abandoned the crowd → *becoming* a true individual → approaching the noble eightfold path.

Here, “he” refers to either the faith-follower or the truth-follower.

1.6.4.3 The meanings, in instructive detail, of the components of this important paragraph are as follows (the numbers are those of the Pali sentence sequence) [1.6.4.1]:

(3) “He has gone beyond the plane of the worldlings” (*vīti, vatto puthujjana, bhūmiṃ*). The 2 individuals—the faith-follower and the truth-follower—are no more caught in the ways of the crowd or the tribe. He is no more “worldly” since he has gone beyond the “way of the counted” (*ganana, pathaṃ*, D 1:32). He does not see himself as a measurable statistic, a cog in the wheel of society and samsara. In short, he is no more a “man of the world” because he is cultivating his mind wholesomely.⁹⁹ His **true renunciation** of the world is just beginning.

(2) “He is descending into the plane of true individuals” (*sappurisa, bhūmiṃ okkanto*). Since he is cultivating his mind wholesomely, he is “descending” (*okkanto*, as in boarding a boat), that is, becoming a “**true individual**” (*sappurisa*): one morally virtuous, mentally calm and clear, and growing in the wisdom of true reality. No more does he depend on the crowd for guidance and approval; he thinks clearly and rightly, and feels peaceful and joyful. In short, he is emotionally independent (*apara-p, paccaya*).¹⁰⁰

(1) “He is descending into the certainty of rightness [the fixed course to rightness]” (*okkanto sammatta, niyāmaṃ*). On account of his wholesome Dharma-life, the faith-follower or the truth-follower is “descending,” heading for, the path of awakening, it will surely awaken him at least as a streamwinner. “**Rightness**” (*sammatta*) refers to the quality of the noble eightfold path, the path of awakening. He is approaching this path, the first stage of which is streamwinning, which he will attain in this life itself. [§§4.4; 5.4]

1.6.4.4 This translation method is called that of “**verbal phrase reversal**,” in which the sequence of verbal phrases is reversed keeping to its English idiomatic sense. In the Pali texts, often enough the most important idea is put first, almost like a cue. This is a helpful strategy in an oral tradition, which the Pali texts originally follow.

⁹⁹ He is one who is “reckoned” (*saṅkha*), ie, measures himself, others and the world in terms of his latent tendencies: see **Aññātara Bhikkhu S 1** (S 22.35,4 etc), SD 31.4; SD 31.3 (1.4.2).

¹⁰⁰ **Nakula S** (A 6.16,4), SD 5.2.

For example, *pāṇātipātā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi*, literally, “The killing-abstaining precept I undertake,” with the verb at the end, too. In English, it is more comfortable when we read this as “I undertake the precept (or training rule) to abstain from killing.” The same rule applies to the 3 jewels formula: *buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi*, “To the Buddha for refuge I go,” which is acceptable, but a more comfortable English rendition is “I go for refuge to the Buddha.” And so, too, *dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi*, and *saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi*.¹⁰¹

1.7 PRACTISING AS A STREAMWINNER

1.7.1 Teachings on the streamwinner’s life. In terms of practice, the simple but effective perception of impermanence is laid out in 10 different ways in Suttas of the Okkanta Saṃyutta (S 25) [1.0]. For theoretical details and inspiring examples of various streamwinners, we should carefully study and reflect on the 74 suttas of **the Sotāpatti Saṃyutta** (S 55).¹⁰² Of special significance are these suttas dealing with the lay once-returner, Mahānāma, and the streamwinner, Sarakāni, which we could begin studying in this chapter, and then work our way through the others. These basic suttas to begin with are as follows:

- **Kaṅkheyya (or Sakambhiya) Sutta** (S 54.12/5:327 f), on the difference between the trainee (*sekha*) and the Buddha, and on the benefits of breath meditation;
- **Mahānāma Suttas 1+2, Godha Sutta, and Sarakāni Suttas 1+2** of the Sarakāni chapter in the Sotāpatti Saṃyutta (S 55.21-25/5:369-380)—all concerning streamwinning;
- **(Upāsaka) Mahānāma Sutta 2** (S 55.37/5:395), on the qualities of a lay follower;
- **(Sotāpanna) Mahānāma Sutta** (S 55.49/5:403), on the qualities of a streamwinner;
- **(Mahānāma) Gilāyana Sutta** (S 55.54/5:408-410), on how to die as a saint (this Sutta).

1.7.2 A streamwinner still has some mental defilements

1.7.2.1 MAHĀNĀMA’S CASE. In **the Cūḷa Dukkha-k,khandha Sutta** (M 14), the once-returner Mahānāma complains to the Buddha that despite his understanding the 3 unwholesome roots, that is, greed, hate and delusion, his mind is still defiled by them. The Buddha consoles Mahānāma by explaining to him that although he is a once-returner, he still has *sensual lust*. The Buddha’s explanation is central to our understanding of sainthood and renunciation.

Mahānāma, even if a noble disciple has clearly seen as it really is, with right wisdom, that sense-desires bring little solace [gratification], but much suffering, much despair, more danger here,¹⁰³

so long as he does not gain zest and joy that are apart from sense-pleasures, apart from unwholesome states, or that is something more peaceful than that, he would not be able to be unaffected by sense-pleasures.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ On the “verbal phrase reversal” rule in Pali translation, see **(Ceto,vimutti) Anuruddha S** (M 127,8.1), SD 54.10; SD 54.12 (2.2.1); SD 54.13 (3.1.9.2).

¹⁰² S 55/5:342-413.

¹⁰³ See V 4:134.

¹⁰⁴ The whole para: *App’assādā kāmā bahu,dukkhā bah’upāyāsā, ādīnavo ettha bhiyyo’ti—iti ce’pi, mahā,nāma, ariya,sāvakassa yathā,bhūtaṃ samma-p,paññāya sudiṭṭhaṃ hoti, so ca aññatr’eva kāmehi aññatra akusalehi dhammehi pīti,suchaṃ nādhigacchati, aññaṃ vā tato santataraṃ, atha kho so n’eva tāva anāvaṭṭī kāmesu hoti.* The “zest and joy that are apart from sense-desires” here refers to the pīti and sukha of the first and second dhyanas. “Something more peaceful than that” refers to the higher dhyanas. “From this passage it seems that a disciple may attain even to the second path and fruit without possessing mundane jhāna” (M:ÑB 1201 n208). **Bodhi:** “The first part of

But, Mahānāma, when a noble disciple has clearly seen as it really is with right wisdom that sense-pleasures bring little solace, but much suffering, much despair, more danger here, and *he gains zest and joy that are apart from sense-pleasures, from unwholesome states, or something more peaceful than that*,¹⁰⁵ then he would be able to be unaffected by sense-desires.

(M 14,4/1:91), SD 4.7

This statement means that the unawakened are overwhelmed by sense-pleasures and sense-desires, on account of which they are unable to fully enjoy the powers of the mind. The stifling grip of sensuality can only be effectively loosened by the personal and total experience of **dhyana**, that is, the mind fully freed from the body so that it is pure consciousness, so to speak. Only when the mind is utterly undefiled by the body can it really bring forth divine bliss that can serve as the basis for liberating wisdom.

1.7.2.2 BREAKING THE 3 FETTERS. Hence, only by the power of **dhyana** and **wisdom** can sensuality be uprooted so that we attain either non-returning (if there is still some spiritual defilement left) or arhathood (if we are fully purified of sensuality). In other words, only the non-returner or the arhat does not feel any defilement related to sensuality, as still happens in the case of Mahānāma, who is only a once-returner at that time.

However, even if we are still stalked by sensuality, we are still capable of awakening, or more correctly, of *beginning* our journey on the path of awakening, or boarding or descending into the boat on the stream of awakening. We need to at least break **the 3 fetters** of self-identity view, attachment to rituals and vows, and doubt.

In simple terms,¹⁰⁶ this means that:

- (1) we should understand and accept that **our body** is impermanent, and as such suffering and unsatisfactory; we need to understand the nature of narcissism and work to overcome it [5];
- (2) we should not look for answers outside of ourselves through reifying or thingifying what are really **mental states**, but look for the answers within our own mind through self-effort;
- (3) we should not **doubt** our capability for self-salvation (such as by seeking an external saviour), and should abandon ideas of self-worthlessness.¹⁰⁷

this statement implies that the subject is at least a stream-enterer, for he is referred to as a ‘noble disciple’ (*ariya, sāvaka*). Though the term *ariya-sāvaka* is occasionally used in loose sense that need not be taken to imply attainment of stream-entry, here the expression ‘[has clearly seen with right] wisdom’ seems to establish his identity as at least a stream-enterer. Yet the second part of the statement implies he does not possess even the first Jhāna, for the phrase used to describe what he lacks [“zest and joy that are apart from unwholesome states or something more peaceful than that”] precisely echoes the wording of the basic formula for the first Jhāna. The state “more peaceful than that” [*santatarāṃ*] would, of course, be the higher Jhānas” (2001:52). This is one of the passages that Bodhi qu as “instances of stream-enterers who are not attainers of Jhānas” (2001:51 f).

¹⁰⁵ “Something more peaceful than that,” *tato santatarāṃ*. Comy explains that while zest and joy (*pīti, sukha*) pertain to the first 2 dhyanas, “something higher” is connected with the 3rd and 4th dhyanas (MA 2:63). On dhyana, see **Sāmañña, phala S** (D 2,75-82/1:73-76), SD 8.10.

¹⁰⁶ For details on the 3 fetters, see **Emotional independence**, SD 40a.8.

¹⁰⁷ **The 10 fetters** are: (1) self-identity view (*sakkāya, diṭṭhi*), (2) doubt (*vicikicchā*), (3) attachment to rituals and vows (*sīla-b, bata, parāmāsa*), (4) sensual lust (*kāma, rāga*), (5) repulsion (*paṭigha*), (6) greed for form existence (*rūpa, rāga*), (7) greed for formless existence (*arūpa, rāga*), (8) conceit (*māna*), (9) restlessness (*uddhacca*), (10) ignorance (*avijjā*) (S 5:61; A 5:13; Vbh 377). In some places, no 45 (*kāma, rāga*) is replaced by illwill (*vyāpāda*). The first 5 are the lower fetters (*orambhāgiya*), and the rest, the higher fetters (*uddhambhāgiya*). The total abandonment of the lower 5 fetters makes one a non-returner (*opapātika* or *anāgāmī*) (see **Ānāpāna, sati S**, M 118,10+n), SD 7.13.

Or, even more briefly, we should realize that the body is really impermanent, not be superstitious, and to be spiritually self-reliant.

1.7.3 A streamwinner would not lapse morally

1.7.3.1 IMMACULATE MORAL VIRTUE. A number of suttas in **the Sotāpatti Saṃyutta** (S 55) state that a streamwinner has wise faith in the 3 jewels and is immaculate in his moral virtue.¹⁰⁸ This 4th and last virtue is fully defined as “He is accomplished with moral virtue dear to the noble ones,¹⁰⁹ unbroken, untorn, unmixed, spotless, liberating, praised by the wise, untarnished, giving rise to concentration.”¹¹⁰

Such a person, with these 4 qualities—wise faith in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, and immaculate in moral virtue—is said to be truly wealthy with great assets.¹¹¹ In **the (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta** (S 25.1) and throughout **the Sotāpatti Saṃyutta** (S 55), we see the streamwinner being defined as one who is “no longer bound for the lower world,¹¹² surely going over to self-awakening”¹¹³ [§6].

1.7.3.2 NOT FALLING BELOW HUMANITY. The phrase “**no longer bound for the lower world**” describes the special quality of the streamwinner, rooted in moral virtue and spirituality. Firstly, his moral virtue is so immaculate that he is incapable of intentionally breaking any of the 5 precepts.¹¹⁴

The 5 precepts define our humanity. In abstaining from killing, the streamwinner respects *life*, and shows lovingkindness to all beings. In abstaining from stealing, he respects what *supports* this life and the *happiness* that attends it, showing others great compassion and generosity. In abstaining from sexual misconduct, he respects the *freedom* that keeps life happy and purposeful, and he himself lives a life of exemplary contentment. In abstaining from falsehood, he is guided by *truth*, and inspires others to seek this liberating truth for themselves; hence, it promotes wisdom in the world. In abstaining from intoxication and heedlessness, he prepares himself for *higher wisdom and awakening*.

1.7.3.3 TRUE NOBILITY. A streamwinner is so noble (in a spiritual sense) that his actions are habitually moral and beneficent. His charity assures him of rebirth in a prosperous family that is Dharma-grounded.¹¹⁵ His moral virtues assure him of divine rebirths.¹¹⁶ When the karma of his heavenly life is exhausted, he is

¹⁰⁸ S 55.46+46+47+48+49/5:403 f. These are said to be “the 4 limbs of a streamwinner” (*sot’āpannassa aṅga*, D 33,1.11(14)/3:227). Cf (1) *sot’āpatti-y-aṅga* above. For a shorter statement on the limbs of a streamwinner, see **Oga-dha S** (S 55.2/5:343 f). For the streamwinner’s practice, see **(Agata,phala) Mahānāma S** (A 6.40/3:284-288), SD 15.3. On the faith of the streamwinner, see Gethin 2001:116.

¹⁰⁹ “Moral virtue dear to the noble ones,” *ariya,kantāni sīlāni*. The noble one’s moral virtue is explained at Vism 7.101-106/221 f. SA says that the noble ones do not violate the 5 precepts; hence, this virtue is dear to them (SA 2:74).

¹¹⁰ “Unbroken, ... giving rise to concentration,” *akhaṇḍehi acchiddehi asabalehi akammāsehi bhujissehi viññūpa-satṭhehi aparāmaṭṭhehi samādhi,samvattanakehi*. See also **Cundī S** (A 5.32/3:36). Cf UA 268. For details, see Vism 1.143-161/51-58, 7.101-106/221 f.

¹¹¹ S 55.44+45/5:402.

¹¹² *Avinipāta*, alt tr “not fated for birth in a suffering state”: see tr, **S 25.1,6 n** below.

¹¹³ *Yo bhikkhave ime dhamme evaṃ jānāti evaṃ passati ayaṃ vuccati sotāpanno avinipāta,dhammo niyato sambodhi,parāyano ti*. “This statement makes it clear how the stream-enterer [streamwinner] differs from those on the way to streamwinning. The faith-follower accepts the teachings on trust (with a limited degree of understanding), the Dhamma-follower through investigation; but the stream-enterer has *known and seen* the teachings directly. I read Se: *evaṃ jānāti evaṃ passati*.” (S:B 1099 n270)

¹¹⁴ On the 5 precepts, see SD 37.8 (2.2).

¹¹⁵ On the necessity of both charity and moral virtue for a good rebirth, see **(Saddha) Jāṇūssoni S** (A 10.177/5:-269-273), SD 2.6a.

¹¹⁶ On the possibility of choosing our own rebirth, see **Sāleyyaka S** (M 41/1:285-290), SD 5.7.

reborn in a good human family.¹¹⁷ As such, he will never be reborn in any subhuman state, that is, he is “no longer bound for the lower world” (*avinipāta*).

The opposite of *avinipāta* is *vinipāta*, “the lower world” or “the suffering states,” which is a name for the 4 woeful courses (*duggati*) or the 4 lower worlds (*apāya*), namely, the hell-beings, the animals, the pretas (departed ones) and the asuras.¹¹⁸ Sometimes, the 5 courses (*pañca,gati*) are mentioned: the hells (*niraya*), the animal kingdom (*tirachāna,yoni*), the preta realm (*pitti,visaya*), the human world (*manussa,-loka*) and the heavenly world (*deva*). Of these, the first three are woeful, with the asura-demons (*asura,-kāya*) as the fourth woeful course.¹¹⁹ The remaining two are said to be “happy courses” (*sugati*). Stream-winners are reborn only in the happy courses. This is the result of his habitual spirituality.

1.7.3.4 CERTAINTY OF AWAKENING. The phrase “**surely going over to self-awakening**” means that the streamwinner would be able to awaken (attain arhathood or nirvana)¹²⁰ in the very next life, or within a couple of lives, or within 7 lives at the most. **The (Uddesa) Sekha Sutta 2** (A 3.87), **the Sa,upādisesa Sutta** (A 9.12) and **the Puggala Paññatti** (Pug1.37-39/16) give the following details of the 3 kinds of streamwinners:

(1) Furthermore, Sāriputta, here a certain person **is fully accomplished in moral virtue, but gains only limited concentration, gains only limited wisdom**. With the total destruction of the 3 lower fetters [1.7.2.2], he is a **single-seeder** (*eka,bījī*), having taken only one more human birth, **[381]** makes an end of suffering.

(2) Furthermore, Sāriputta, here a certain person **is fully accomplished in moral virtue, but gains only limited concentration, gains only limited wisdom**. With the total destruction of the 3 lower fetters, he is a **clan-to-clan-goer** (*kolaṃ,kola*), having re-arisen and wandered amongst two or three families, makes an end of suffering.

(3) Furthermore, Sāriputta, here a certain person **is fully accomplished in moral virtue, but gains only limited concentration, gains only limited wisdom**. With the total destruction of the 3 lower fetters, he is a **seven-at-most** (*satta-k,khattu,parama*), having re-arisen and wandered amongst devas and humans for 7 lives at the most, makes an end of suffering.

A 3.87/1:232-234 (SD 80.13) & A 9.12,8-10/4:380-382 + SD 3.3(3) (refrain omitted)¹²¹

Of special interest here is the expression, “**7 lives**,” or more technically, “seven-at-most” (*satta-k,khattu,parama*), when he may be reborn in the heavens or amongst humans (but never in a lower or subhuman world). Neither the suttas nor commentaries¹²² give any detail regarding its duration. Basically, I think that the number is “symbolic,” meaning something like “in a short time,” in cosmic terms.¹²³

However, it should be noted that if a streamwinner is reborn amongst the gods, especially those of the form realms (if the streamwinner is a dhyana meditator), his life-span would be very long indeed, lasting many celestial years, or a world-cycle, or even up to 500 world-cycles!¹²⁴ As for the streamwinner in his 7th

¹¹⁷ On when the good karma of heavenly beings is exhausted, they are reborn straight into suffering states, see **(Nānā,kaṛaṇa) Puggala S 1** (A 4.123/2:126-128), SD 23/8a.

¹¹⁸ Vism 13.92 f/427.

¹¹⁹ D 33,2.1/3:234; A 11.68.

¹²⁰ VbhA 430.

¹²¹ See also **Purisa,gati S** (A 7.52/4:70-74), SD 82.10 & **The layman and dhyana**, SD 8.5 (3).

¹²² See eg SA 3:238-240; KhpA 182, 186 f; ItA 1:85, 2:124; SnA 1:278; VbhA 430; PugA 196 f.

¹²³ This is confirmed by various meditation monks I have chance to consult.

¹²⁴ The 500 world-cycles (*kappa*) constitute the life-span of the Vaha-p,phala devas and the Asañña,satta (non-conscious beings), the highest of the form-realms just below the Pure Abodes of the non-returners (who live between 1000 to 16,000 world-cycles). On the 31 planes and the relative lifespans of each, see SD 1.7 (Table 1.7). It is also

life, says the Vibhaṅga Commentary, no matter how he dies, whether as Sakra, king of the gods, or as a human, or were he murdered, or even hit by lightning, he would experience no rebirth (VhbA 430).

1.7.3.5 COMPASSION AND ENGAGEMENT. A streamwinner is not only a morally virtuous and emotionally independent individual,¹²⁵ but according to **the (Upāsaka) Mahānāma Sutta 1** (A 8.25), he is also a truly compassionate and “socially-engaged” lay disciple. Such an individual is one who has gone for refuge in the 3 jewels and keeps to the 5 precepts.

Furthermore, he not only has wise faith, is morally virtuous, is generous, visits virtuous monastics, listens to the Dharma, remembers it, and investigates it, but he also inspires others to do the same. Thus, the streamwinner is one committed *to the propagation of the Dharma*.¹²⁶ He is truly a Dharmafarer, a practitioner and a missioner of the true teaching.

A brief list of such qualities—known as “the limbs [factors] for streamwinning” (*sotāpatti-y-āṅga*)—is found in **the (Sotāpatti-y-) Aṅga Sutta** (S 55.50).¹²⁷ In short, these are the qualities of faith (*saddhā*), moral virtue (*sīla*), charity (*cāga*) and wisdom (*paññā*), which are also the qualities of a true individual (*sappurisa*).¹²⁸

1.7.3.6 THE POSSIBILITY OF AWAKENING. **The Sa,upādi,sesa Sutta** (A 9.12) is a short but remarkable text that gives a full list of 9 kinds of saints (except the arhat). Of special interest here is that after listing the various kinds of saints, especially the 3 kinds of streamwinners [1.7.3.3]—that is, the avenues for our awakening in this life itself—the Buddha declares:

Not until now, Sāriputta, has this Dharma discourse been declared to bhikshus, nuns, laymen or laywomen. What is the reason for this?

So that after hearing this Dharma discourse, *they do not bring heedlessness upon themselves!* Moreover, Sāriputta, this Dharma discourse has been given by me *simply because of my being questioned.*
(A 9.12/4:381 f), SD 3.3(3)

2 Attha,veda and dhamma,veda

2.1 DISCIPLES AND FOLLOWERS

2.1.1 The remarkable **(Agata,phala) Mahānāma Sutta** (A 6.10) is about the well-known 6 recollections (*anussati*)—on each of the 3 jewels, on moral virtue, on charity, and on devas—any of which, when practised by a noble disciple (*ariya,sāvaka*, such as a streamwinner),¹²⁹ will bring this result:

possible that if the streamwinner is capable of attaining dhyana, then he could go on to become a once-returner or beyond, ie, even attain arhathood.

¹²⁵ See n on “independent of others,” in **Nakula S** (A 6.16,4/3:298), SD 5.2.

¹²⁶ A 8.25/4:220-222 (SD 6.3).

¹²⁷ These same 4 factors appear in **(Sotāpatti) Phala S** (S 55.55/5:410 f; A 5.246/2:245), SD 3.3(4.1), where they are called “the limbs for streamwinning” (*sotāpatti-y-aṅga*); **Paññā,vuddhi S** (A 5.246a/2:245 (A:B A 2:248), where they are said to “promote wisdom” (*paññā,vuddhiyā*) & **(Manussa) Bahu,kāra S** (A 5.246/2:245 = A:B 2:249), where they are said to be of great help to a human being (*manussa,bhūtassa bahu,kāra*). Cf the 4 “limbs of a streamwinner” (*sot’āpannassa aṅgāni*), see **Pañca Vera Bhaya S** (S 12.41/2:68-70), SD 3.3(4.2); **Ogadha S** (S 55.2/5:343 f). For the streamwinner’s practice, see **(Agata,phala) Mahānāma S** (A 6.40/3:284-288), SD 15.3. See also D 33,1.11(14)/3:227.

¹²⁸ **Sappurisa S** (M 113/3:37-45), SD 29.6. The qualities of a *sappurisa* are given at **D 33,2.2(6)/3:252**, **34,1.8(7)/3:283**; **M 110,14-24/3:23 f**; **A 7.64/4:113**, **8.38/4:144**. For other details on the streamwinner, see S:B 1517-1520 (Intro to S 55).

¹²⁹ “Noble saint” refers to any of the 4 kinds of aryas, viz, the streamwinner (*sot’āpanna*), the once-returner (*sāka-dāgāmi*), the non-returner (*anāgāmi*) and the arhat (*arahata*). On the saints, see **Kiṭṭāgiri S** (M 70), SD 11.1 (5).

... his mind is not obsessed by lust, not obsessed by hate, not obsessed by delusion. At that time, his mind is straight,¹³⁰ ever focused on *the object of recollection*.¹³¹

Mahānāma, a noble disciple whose mind is straight
 gains **inspired knowledge in the goal** (*attha,veda*);
 gains **inspired knowledge in the Dharma**¹³² (*dhamma,veda*);
 gains gladness connected with Dharma;
 when he is gladdened, zest is born;
 when the mind is zestful, the body is tranquil;
 the tranquil body feels happy;
 when one is happy the mind becomes concentrated.

This, Mahānāma, is called a noble disciple:

he dwells impartial (*sama-p,patta*) amongst partial [vicious] people;
 he dwells unafflicted (*avyāpajjha*) amongst afflicted people.

As one who has entered upon the Dharma stream,¹³³ he cultivates the recollection

(A 6.10/3:284-288), SD 15.3

2.1.2 Here, *attha,veda* refers to the clear and joyful understanding of the *attha*—the purpose and the benefit—of the spiritual life, an understanding resulting from a “straight mind” (*uju,gata,citta*), that is, one that is easily directed to the meditation-object and a mindfulness trained on the path towards liberation. All this generates an unshakable joyful faith rooted in some level of direct seeing of reality

This joyful faith describes a key quality of **a faith-follower** (*saddhā'nusārī*). *Veda* usually means “knowledge or knowing,” but here it means joy. Technically, *attha,veda* means “the joy caused by understanding the meaning or benefit” of the Dharma.¹³⁴ It is simply a joy of knowing, even without much understanding, as in the case of one who accepts a teaching on *faith*. This often happens with regards to the truth of impermanence, which a faith-follower had no difficulty accepting.

2.2 In a similar context, we see *dhamma,veda* as referring to a deep understanding of the Dharma as wisdom (seeing the true nature of existence). While *attha,veda* is the joy of knowing, *dhamma,veda* is the joy of understanding, as in the case of the truth-follower.

While *attha* refers to a faithful’s vision and discovery of the path towards liberation, feeling quite content just to begin journeying on it, the *dhamma* refers to our careful examining and analysis of the terrain and structure of this path, even mapping it. Hence, *dhamma,veda* refers to the main quality of **a truth-follower** (*dhammānusārī*).

2.3 Both the faith-follower and the truth-follower, however, are not yet aryas, that is, saints of the path, but are declared in **the (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta** (A 25.1) to have “gone beyond the plane of the worldlings, descending into the plane of true individuals,” (*sappurisa,bhūmiṃ okkanto vītivatto puthujjana,bhūmiṃ*).¹³⁵

¹³⁰ “His mind is straight” (*uju,gata,cittam*), ie, “his mind goes directly (*ujukam eva*) to the meditation on the recollection of the Buddha” (AA 3:337).

¹³¹ That is, recollecting the virtues of one of the 3 jewels, or his own moral virtue.

¹³² We need to use a calque (loanword or loan-translation) “**Dharma**” (*dhamma*) here because it can mean *either* “teaching” or “truth”: in the case of the learner (streamwinner, once-returner, non-returner), his inspired knowledge is more likely to be in the teaching, whereas the arhat is clearly inspired by the truth that he has understood.

¹³³ “The Dharma stream,” *dhamma,sota*. Obviously here, the Buddha is referring either to streamwinning or one on the way to becoming one. For details, see SD 3.2 (A 5.202) n + SD 3.14 (A 6.44) n.

¹³⁴ Usu as *attha,veda dhamma,veda*: M 1:37,30 f, 221,30, 325,18; A 3:285,27 (see Comy), 5:329,30, 330,1 f. For nn, see **(Agata,phala) Mahānāma S** (A 6.10), SD 15.3 (4); SD 10.16 (3.4.3.2).

¹³⁵ A 25.1/3:225.

That is to say, they are both no more worldlings (*puthujjana*) but not yet noble saints (*ariya*), and are abiding in an intermediate state of spiritual growth supported by **the joy of knowing and understanding** that will ripen into streamwinning in this life itself, if not surely at the moment of dying (id).¹³⁶

3 The Abhidhamma view

3.1 The Abhidhamma tradition generally regards the supramundane path as lasting only a single mind-moment. As such, both the faith-follower and the truth-follower should technically (according to the Abhidhamma system), last only the mind-moment of the path.¹³⁷ Although this view is known in the Commentaries, it finds no support in the suttas.¹³⁸

3.2 Rupert Gethin similarly thinks that “the strict Abhidhamma understanding [in terms of momentariness of the path-attainment] is not altogether satisfactory for the Nikāyas here.” (2001:131)

... a number of Nikāya passages seem to quite clearly envisage all seven of these persons as walking about and performing tasks that would seem to involve the *saddhānusārin* and *dhammānusārin* in something rather more than momentary existence. A case in point is the following Aṅguttara-nikāya passage:

It is wonderful that when the Saṅgha has been invited by me [for a meal], *devatās* approach and announce, “Houselord, this *bhikkhu* is *ubhatobhāga-vimutta*, this one is *paññā-vimutta*, this one is *kāya-sakkhin*, this one is *diṭṭhi-patta*, this one is *saddhā-vimutta*, this one is *dhammānusārin*, [this one is *saddhā’nusārī*, this one is virtuous, of good *dhamma*,]¹³⁹ this one is unvirtuous, of bad *dhamma*.” Yet when I am serving food to the Saṅgha, I do not find that the thought arises, “I shall give a little to this one or I shall give a lot to this one.” Rather I give with an even mind.

(A 4:215,10; cf M 1:439 f; A 1:73f)¹⁴⁰

4 Sarakāni

4.1 The (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta should be studied with the 2 **Sarakāni Suttas**,¹⁴¹ which describe how an erstwhile drinker dies a streamwinner, keeping to the spiritual training at the time of his death. The Buddha explains to Mahānāma how Sarakāni dies a saint:

Mahānāma, when a layman has gone for refuge over a long time to the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, how could he go to a lower world? Mahānāma, Sarakāni the Sakya had for a long time gone for refuge to the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, so how could he go to a lower world?

(S 55.24,10/5:375)

4.2 In fact, it is clear from the Sarakāni Suttas, that **Sarakāni** is either a truth-follower or a faith-follower, as **Analayo** explains:

¹³⁶ Below, we shall examine the nature of the “lesser streamwinner” as a “good worldling” (*kalyāṇa puthujjana*), as a state just before the faith-follower and the truth-follower [1.7.1].

¹³⁷ Eg MA 3:151 f ad M 1:439 f.

¹³⁸ Cf Bodhi, S:B 1099 n268.

¹³⁹ Omitted in Gethin’s text.

¹⁴⁰ Gethin 2001:131 n122; see esp pp129-133.

¹⁴¹ S 55.24-25/5:375-380. See also S 55.24 (SD 3.6).

Since S 5:379 [**Sarakāni Sutta 2**]¹⁴² has the same set of terms used in the definition of the “Dhamma-follower” (*dhammānusārī*) and the “faith-follower” (*saddhā’nusārī*) at M 1:479 [**Kīṭā-giri Sutta**],¹⁴³ it seems possible that he has been such a “follower” and was thus bound to realize stream-entry latest at death (cf S 3:225 [**Cakkhu Sutta**]¹⁴⁴ which states that it is impossible for a Dhamma-follower or a faith-follower to pass away without having realized the fruit of stream-entry). (2003:255 n22; normalized and annotated)

5 The perception of impermanence

5.1 The most universal spiritual exercise in early Buddhism is the perception of impermanence, traditionally called ***anicca saññā***. The briefest and most famous definition of this is: “Whatever is of the nature to arise, all that has the nature to end” (*yaṃ kiñci samudaya,dhammaṃ, sabban taṃ nirodha,dhammaṃ*),¹⁴⁵ which is sometimes known as the “one-factored dependent arising.”¹⁴⁶

Such a key practice, which is also the basis for streamwinning, the first step towards awakening, can take many forms of spiritual exercise. Two such exercises are described in **the Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas**¹⁴⁷ in parts (4)-(6) of its “satipatthana refrain,”¹⁴⁸ which runs thus:

So he dwells

- (1) observing *the body in the body* internally,
- (2) or, observing *the body in the body* externally,
- (3) or, observing *the body in the body* both internally and externally;
- (4) or, he dwells observing states that arise in *the body*,
- (5) or, he dwells observing states that pass away in *the body*,
- (6) or, he dwells observing states that arise and pass away in *the body*.

Or else, he maintains the mindfulness that ‘There is *a body*,’ merely for knowing and awareness. And he dwells independent, not clinging to anything in this world.

And that, bhikshus, is how a monk [a meditator] dwells observing *the body in the body*.

(M 10,5+7+9+11+13+15+25+31; mutatis mutandis¹⁴⁹ at 33, 35, 37, 39, 41, 45), SD 13.3

Thus he observes “the nature of arising, of passing away, and of arising and passing away.”¹⁵⁰ In the course of watching the body, feelings, the mind, and dharmas, the practitioner goes on to watch the “nature of arising” (*samudaya,dhamma*), the “nature of passing away” (*vaya,dhamma*), and the “nature of (both) arising and passing away” (*samudaya,vaya,dhamma*).¹⁵¹ The practice is done by first, either

¹⁴² S 55.25.10-11/5:379.

¹⁴³ M 70,18-19/1:479 (SD 11.1).

¹⁴⁴ S 25.1/3:115.

¹⁴⁵ V 1:11; D 1:110, M 3:280; S 4:47, 214, 330, 5:423; A 4:143 f.

¹⁴⁶ See **Dependent arising**, SD 5.16 (2.1).

¹⁴⁷ D 22; M 10; see SD 13 see esp SD 13.1 (3.8).

¹⁴⁸ See SD 13.1 (3.7).

¹⁴⁹ “With the appropriate changes” in ref to “feelings,” to “mind,” and to “dharmas” [phenomena].

¹⁵⁰ Colloquially, this is often spoken of as “Watching the nature of rising, of falling (away), and of rising and falling (away).”

¹⁵¹ See Gethin 2001:53 & Analayo 2003: 102 f. Cf AK Warder 1971b:282 f on this usage of *-dhamma* in the Nikāyas. The Comys, however, take *dhamma* as indicating the conditions for the arising and fall of the body, etc (see DA 3:765, 768, 769; MA 1:249 f), although the Subcomys also allow that *dhamma* can have the sense of “nature” here (DAT 2:381; MAPT:Be 1:350: *pakati,vācī vā dhamma,saddo*). In the end the point would seem to make little difference to the general purport of the expression: the *bhikkhu* sees how body, etc, arise and fall away. (Gethin’s fn; normalized)

watching only “rising” or only “passing away”. Having started with one, in due course, we continue with the other. Or, when we feel focused enough, we can move on to watch “rising and passing away” consecutively.

5.2 The Samudaya,dhamma Sutta 1¹⁵² is a reflection on the impermanence of the 5 aggregates. It should also be noted that the Sutta defines “**ignorance**” (*avijjā*) as not knowing that the 5 aggregates are of *the nature of arising, of passing away, and of arising and passing away*; and “**true knowledge**” as truly knowing that the 5 aggregates are of *the nature of arising, of passing away, and of arising and passing away*.

5.3 The Avijjā Sutta 1¹⁵³ has instructions for another exercise in the perception of impermanence by way of noting that the senses, sense-objects and feelings that arise on account of the senses (whether pleasant, painful or neutral) are all impermanent—knowing this, we abandon ignorance, and true knowledge arises in us.

While **the (Āyatana) Nandi-k,khaya Sutta 1**¹⁵⁴ shows how the mind is freed through seeing the 6 senses as impermanent, its parallel, **the (Āyatana) Nandi-k,khaya Sutta 2**,¹⁵⁵ shows how the mind is freed through seeing the 6 sense-objects as impermanent.

Another parallel sutta, **the (Khandha) Nandi-k,khaya Sutta 1**,¹⁵⁶ on the other hand, shows how the reflection on the aggregates as being impermanent liberates our mind.

5.4 As we have noted above [1], **the (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta** states that one who investigates the nature of impermanence (the truth-follower), or even when one merely has faith in the fact of impermanence (which is clearly evident in daily life) (the faith-follower),¹⁵⁷ will become **a streamwinner**, that is, take the first step on the path of awakening: “He is incapable of dying without having attained the fruit of stream-winning.”¹⁵⁸

5.5 The (Ānisaṃsa) Anicca Saññā Sutta (A 6.102) mentions 6 advantages of the perception of impermanence, as follows:

- (1) All formations will appear uncertain [non-lasting] to me (*sabba,sāṅkhārā ca me anavaṭṭhito khāyissanti*).
- (2) My mind will not delight in all the world [or in the world of the all, that is, the 6 sense-experiences] (*sabba,loke ca me mano nābhiramissati*).
- (3) My mind will rise above all the world (*sabba,lokā ca me mano vuṭṭhahissati*).
- (4) My mind will tend towards nirvana (*nibbāṇa,poṇaṇ ca me mānasam bhavissati*).
- (5) The mental fetters will be broken by me (*samyojanā ca me pahānam gacchanti*).
- (6) And I shall attain to the supreme recluseship (that is, the benefits of the holy life) (*paramena ca sāmāññena samannāgato bhavissāmī ti*). (A 6.102/3:443), SD 93.7

¹⁵² S 22.126/3:170-172 (SD 12.5).

¹⁵³ S 35.79/4:50 (SD 12.6).

¹⁵⁴ S 35.155/142 (SD 12.7).

¹⁵⁵ S 35.156/142 (SD 12.8).

¹⁵⁶ S 22.51/3:51 (SD 12.9).

¹⁵⁷ There is a very clear difference between self-verifiable faith in impermanence (which is true reality) and self-constructed faith in a God-notion (or similar constructs) reinforced through dogmas, psychological means (eg fear) social control, and mistaken perception. We may or must deny God, but we cannot deny impermanence.

¹⁵⁸ See also S:B 1098 nn268-269.

The main benefit here would, of course, be number (6), that is, the attainment of spiritual liberation itself, or awakening through the attaining of **streamwinning**, as stated in suttas such as **the (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta** (S 25.1) here.¹⁵⁹

5.6 A compact teaching on the practice of **the perception of impermanence** would surely be that applied to the 5 aggregates, since all sentient beings are comprised of them. The Buddha’s teaching to **Rādha** on the 5 aggregates is recorded in a succinct discourse:

SD 16.7(5.7)

(Rādha) Sot’āpanna Sutta

The Discourse on the Streamwinner (to Rādha) | S 23.7/3:192 f¹⁶⁰

Traditional: S 3.2.1.7 = Saṃyutta 3, Khandha Vagga 2, Rādha Saṃyutta 1, Paṭhama Māra Vagga 7

Theme: Understanding the aggregates leads to streamwinning

1-2 At Sāvattī.

3 To Rādha who was sitting down at one side, the Blessed One said this:

4 Rādha, there are these 5 aggregates of clinging.

What are the five?

4 They are, namely,

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| (1) the form aggregate of clinging, | <i>rūp’upādāna khandha</i> |
| (2) the feeling aggregate of clinging | <i>vedan’upādāna khandha</i> |
| (3) the perception aggregate of clinging | <i>saññ’upādāna khandha</i> |
| (4) the formations aggregate of clinging | <i>saṅkhār’upādāna khandha</i> |
| (5) the consciousness aggregate of clinging | <i>viññāṇ’upādāna khandha</i> [193] |

5 When, Rādha, a noble disciple understands, as they really are,

the arising,	<i>samudaya</i>
the ending,	<i>attha,gama</i>
the gratification,	<i>assāda</i>
the dangers [disadvantages],	<i>ādīnava</i>
the escape,	<i>nissaraṇa</i>

regarding these 5 aggregates of clinging,

that noble disciple, Rādha, is called a streamwinner, no longer bound for the lower world,¹⁶¹ surely going over to self-awakening.

— evaṃ —

5.7 One of the best evidence we have for the efficacy of the perception of impermanence in the attaining of streamwinning is found in **the Mahā Rāhul’ovāda Sutta** (M 72), where the Buddha exhorts Rāhula thus:

Rāhula, cultivate the perception of impermanence. For when you cultivate the perception of impermanence, the conceit I-am (*asmi,māna*) will be abandoned. (M 72,23/1:424 f)

“The conceit ‘I-am’” ranges from the grossest form of narcissistic pride to a subtle feeling of our special abilities or attainment, that is, a sense of superiority. This latter case—**conceit**—forms the 8th spiritual

¹⁵⁹ See further **Entering the stream**, SD 3.3.

¹⁶⁰ This sutta’s teaching is identical to that in **(Khandha) Sotāpanna S** (S 22.109/3:160 f).

¹⁶¹ *Avinīpāta*, alt tr “not fated for birth in a suffering state”; opp of *vinīpāta*, “the world of suffering,” another name for the 4 woeful courses (*duggati*) or the 4 lower worlds (*apāya*) (Vism 13.92 f) [1.7.3.2]. See SID: *avinīpāta*.

fetter,¹⁶² broken only by the arhat. However, in its less unwholesome form—as self-identity view (*sakkāya, ditṭhi*)—it is overcome by proper practice of the perception of impermanence.¹⁶³

— — —

(Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta

The (Impermanent) Eye Discourse

S 25.1

- 1 At Sāvatti.
- 2 There the Blessed One said:

The 6 senses are impermanent

- 3 “Bhikshus,

<u>the eye</u>	is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise; ¹⁶⁴
<u>the ear</u>	is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise;
<u>the nose</u>	is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise;
<u>the tongue</u>	is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise;
<u>the body</u>	is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise;
<u>the mind</u>	is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise.

The faith-follower [1.3]

4 ¹⁶⁵Bhikshus, one who has faith thus, who *firmly believes* these truths [is convinced of these truths], is called a **faith-follower**.

4.2 ¹⁶⁶He has gone beyond the plane of the worldlings.¹⁶⁷ He is descending¹⁶⁸ into the plane of true individuals;¹⁶⁹ descending into the certainty of rightness [the fixed course to rightness].¹⁷⁰

¹⁶² The 10 fetters (*saṃyojana*): see Intro (1.1.1) n on “the 3 fetters.”

¹⁶³ For a more detailed discussion, see “I”: **The nature of identity**, SD 19.1.

¹⁶⁴ *Aniccaṃ vipariṇāmiṃ aññāthā, bhāvī.*

¹⁶⁵ *Yo bhikkhave ime dhamme evaṃ saddahati adhimuccati, ayaṃ vuccati saddhā’nusārī okkanto sammatta, niyāmaṃ sappurisa, bhūmiṃ okkanto vītivatto puthujjana, bhūmiṃ.* The operative verbs here are *saddahati* (“he has faith (in)”) and *adhimuccati* (“he resolves, adheres to, is sure of”). I have rendered *adhimuccati* here as “(he) firmly believes ...”. On the streamwinner’s faith, see **Entering the stream**, SD 3.3 (5).

¹⁶⁶ *Okkanto sammatta, niyāmaṃ sappurisa, bhūmiṃ okkanto vīti, vatto puthujjana, bhūmiṃ.* On the meaning of this sentence [1.6.1]; on the translation of this key passage [1.6.4].

¹⁶⁷ “Worldlings,” *puthujjana*, ie, “born of the crowd”; more fully called *assutavā puthujjanā*, “untutored worldling,” one unskilled (*akovidā*), having only a little theoretical knowledge of the Dharma, undisciplined (*avinīta*), and lacking practical training in the Dharma. He is not a “seer of the noble ones” (*ariya, dassavī*), has no regard for the Buddha and the noble disciples (the saints), because he lacks the wisdom-eye that discerns the truth they have seen. “Noble ones” (*ariya*) and “true individuals” (*sappurisa*) are often synonymous. See also MA 1:20-25; SA 2:98-101, 2:251 f; AA 1:61-63; Nc 75-78; Pm 2:445-449; DhsA 348-354.

¹⁶⁸ *Okkanto* (mfñ; past part of *okkamati*): see (1.6.1.3).

¹⁶⁹ “True individuals,” *sappurisa*, also “superior person,” “virtuous person,” “ideal person”; often syn with “noble disciple,” *ariya, sāvaka*, but here clearly includes those, although not yet on the path, but is assured of it, viz, the

4.3 He is incapable of doing any intentional deed by which he might be reborn in hell, or in the animal birth, or in the preta realm.

4.4 He is incapable of dying without having attained the fruit of streamwinning.¹⁷¹

The truth-follower [1.2]

5 Bhikshus, one who accepts these truths after just some pondering over them with wisdom thus,¹⁷² is called a **truth-follower**.

5.2 He has gone beyond the plane of the worldlings. He is descending into the plane of true individuals; descending into the certainty of rightness [the fixed course to rightness].” [§4.2]

5.3 He is incapable of doing any intentional deed by which he might be reborn in hell, or in the animal birth, or in the preta realm.

5.4 He is incapable of dying without having attained the fruit of streamwinning.

The streamwinner

6 One who knows and sees these truths thus is called a **streamwinner**, no longer bound for the lower world,¹⁷³ surely going over to self-awakening.”¹⁷⁴

— evaṃ —

faith-follower and the truth-follower. The qualities of the *sappurisa* are given in **Sappurisa S** (M 113/3:37-45), SD 29.6; see also **D 33**, 2.2(6)/3:252, **34**.1.8(7)/3:283; **M 110**, 14-24/3:23 f; **A 7.64**/4:113, **8.38**/4:144.

¹⁷⁰ *Sammatta, niyāmaṃ*. See (1.5). On the translation of this key passage [1.6.4]

¹⁷¹ *Abhabbo taṃ kammaṃ kātuṃ yaṃ kammaṃ katvā nirayaṃ vā tiracchāna, yoniṃ vā petti, visayaṃ vā uppajjeyya. Abhabbo ca tāva kālaṃ kātuṃ yāva na sotāpatti, phalaṃ sacchikaroti*. This is the Sutta’s key statement and clearly refers to what, after the Buddha’s time, is referred to as a “lesser streamwinner” (*cūḷa, sotāpanna, culla, sotāpanna, cullaka, sotāpanna*). See **Entering the stream**, SD 3.3(6).

¹⁷² *Yassa kho bhikkhave ime dhammā evaṃ paññāya mattaso nijjhānaṃ khamanti*.

¹⁷³ **Avinipāta**, alt tr “not fated for birth in a suffering state”; opp of *vinipāta*, “the world of ruin/suffering,” another name for the 4 woeful courses (*duggati*) or the 4 lower worlds (*apāya*), esp as *niraya, tiracchāna, pettivisaya, asura-kāyā* (KhA 189, 12 = DA 2:496, 11 (on D 2:55, 27) = SA 2:97, 5 (on S 2:92, 16); Vism 13.92 f). Sometimes 5 courses (*pañca, gati*) (D 33, 2.1(4)/3:234; A 9.68/4:459) are mentioned: the hells (*niraya*), the animal birth (*tiracchāna, yoni*), the ghost realm (*petti-* or *pitti, visaya*), the human world (*manussa*) and the heavenly world (*deva*). Of these, the first 3 are woeful, with the asura-demons (*asura, kāyā*) as the fourth woeful course. The remaining two are “happy courses” (*sugati*). For a discussion, see A:ÑB 1999:14-19. See **Pañca, gati S** (A 9.68/4:459), SD 2.20. On a late work, **Pañca, gati, dīpana**, ed L Feer (JPTS 1884:152 ff); tr Feer, *Annales du Musée Guimet* 5, 1883:514-528: sv Naraka, kaṇḍa, Tiracchāna~, Peta~, Manussa~, Deva~.

¹⁷⁴ *Yo bhikkhave ime dhamme evaṃ jānāti evaṃ passati ayaṃ vuccati sotāpanno avinipāta, dhammo niyato sambodhi, parāyano ti*. “This statement makes it clear how the stream-enterer [streamwinner] differs from those on the way to streamwinning. The faith-follower accepts the teachings on trust (with a limited degree of understanding), the Dhamma-follower through investigation; but the stream-enterer has *known and seen* the teachings directly. I read Se: *evaṃ jānāti evaṃ passati*.” (S:B 1099 n270). [1.7.3]. Further see **Entering the stream**, SD 3.3.

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